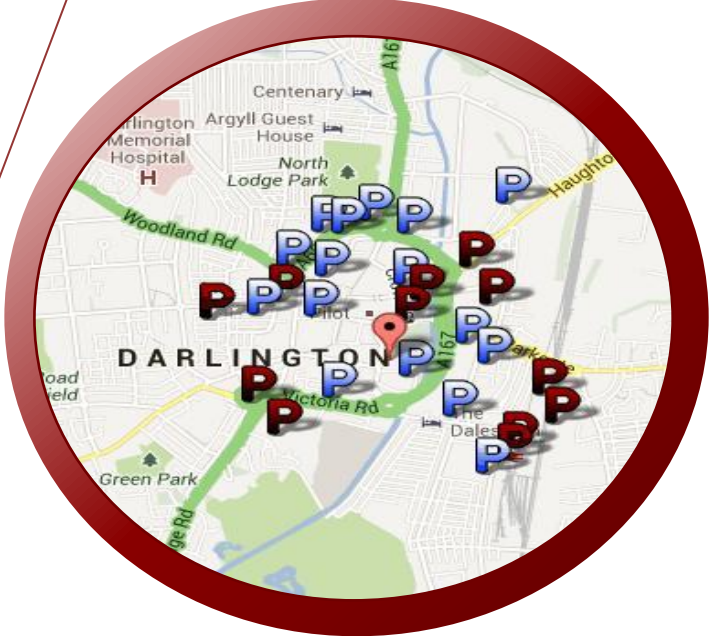




# Darlington Parking Strategy 2014 - 2026



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## Foreword

Darlington's economy has many advantages including:

- a diverse range of businesses trading in many sectors – meaning that the local economy is more resilient to economic downturns;
- good education and training facilities - Darlington has some of the best school results in the country;
- excellent road, rail and air connections as well as close proximity to Teesport;
- it is set in an area that has a high quality of life with a vibrant town centre and has something for everyone culturally.

The provision of high quality parking for motorised vehicles throughout the Borough is seen as critical in keeping Darlington as a competitive place to do business, whilst maintaining the environment that makes for its high quality of life.

Using evidence on existing demand for parking, survey data on customer satisfaction with parking and forecasts of future parking demand, this strategy encompasses all of the issues around parking in the Borough.

The strategy looks at where parking should be provided, what type of parking should be provided, parking charges, payment methods and what can be done to protect the interests of residents living in areas with high levels of demand for parking, for example streets close to the Town Centre.

The strategy sets out seven objectives that will drive associated actions helping to ensure that parking for motorised vehicles plays its part in achieving our priority outcomes for Darlington as a place where people choose to live, to do business, to work and to visit.

The strategy action plan will be reviewed annually to monitor progress against delivery of the actions and their contribution to our priority outcomes.

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## Executive Summary

In 2012 work began on producing a parking strategy – the initial phase involved preparation of a technical assessment of vehicle parking provision in the Borough and the future strategy that the Council should follow in order to facilitate a thriving town centre, employment opportunities and balance travel choice for residents, businesses and visitors. The research addresses fundamental questions like:

- What is the optimum number of spaces to manage demand for parking?
- Where should they be located?
- What is the right balance between short and long stay spaces?
- How should charging be managed to support economic prosperity whilst helping to encourage more sustainable travel?

### Where are we now?

- **Parking supply** – with more than 4000 off-street parking spaces and around 375 on-street spaces within close proximity of the town centre there is sufficient parking supply in Darlington to satisfy current demand, however, the supply is not necessarily in the right places, with some car parks at times operating at full capacity while others operate under capacity.
- **Parking charges** – parking charges are considered to be at the right level when compared to similar towns (for example Middlesbrough, Stockton and Redcar all have graded charges but generally charge £1 per hour in short stay car parks) but a little more flexibility is required., for example a wider range of short stay charges.
- **Payment methods** – the only current methods of paying for parking in Darlington are pay and display and pay by phone. More choice of payment methods, such as pay on foot and payment using up to date mobile phone technology is needed to add to the existing choice of pay and display.
- **Residents Parking Zones** – residents parking zones on the whole work well but more options are needed for visitors and to mitigate the impact of non-residential parking.
- **Safety and security** – most of the Council operated car parks in Darlington are covered by CCTV (the exceptions are Winston Street and the lower levels of East Street). To maximise levels of safety CCTV should be installed, where possible, in Council car parks.
- **Disabled parking** – current policy on disabled parking allows blue badge holders to park for free for three hours in off-street car parks and on-street, as well as on double yellow lines. Consultation with blue badge holders and Darlington Association on Disability suggests this policy is effective.

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- **Traffic management** – quality signage is important to ensure drivers know where car parking is available and therefore to avoid congestion caused by drivers searching for parking. Parking signage in Darlington is not as comprehensive as it could be so this will be addressed in the strategy's action plan.
  - **District centres** – during preparation of the draft strategy a number of businesses and residents identified problems with parking in Cockerton. Following further consultation, it is apparent that whilst there are some parking issues in Cockerton, other than improving parking signage the majority of Cockerton residents and businesses do not support any changes to the management of parking in Cockerton. No significant parking issues have been identified in other District Centres.
  - **HGV's / Coaches** – long stay HGV and coach parking is currently provided at Chestnut Street car park. This appears to work well in terms of the needs of HGV and coach drivers.
  - **Motorcycles** – secure motorcycle parking is currently provided free of charge in short stay car parks.

#### **Priority Action Plan**

Seven key objectives provide the framework for some 24 actions which will deliver the Strategy. The Action Plan focuses on delivery over the next 5 years (the plan will be updated annually), broken down into short, medium and long term projects.

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## Why a new strategy?

Darlington Borough Council last produced a parking strategy in 2009 – since then there have been several changes, locally, nationally and globally, affecting parking, including:-

- Introduction at the end of 2010 of civil parking enforcement
- Global and national economic downturn
- Pressure for development on existing town centre car parks in line with the emerging Town Centre Strategy and Local Plan

This new parking strategy will set parking policy for the same period as Darlington's emerging local plan, 2014 to 2026. It has reflected on the 2009 strategy and provided an opportunity to examine what is already being done and what has already been achieved in the Borough while also looking at what is required from the strategic management of parking over the next decade.

The technical study of parking in the Borough which was produced in 2012 concluded that much of the existing parking policies are effective and that continuation of some policies was the best way forward. However there are changes required with some policies, and adjustments and fine tuning with others and this strategy addresses those changes.

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## Context

This strategy is underpinned by national, regional and local policy. The national transport strategy is set out in the white paper, '**The Future of Transport: a network for 2030**' (July 2004) which sets out a long-term strategy for a modern, efficient and sustainable transport system backed up by sustained high levels of investment over 15 years. It states that local authorities should have a clear idea of what its parking policy is and what it intends to achieve by it, adding that when setting and appraising policy an authority should take account of:-

- Existing and projected levels of parking demand;
- Availability and pricing of on and off street parking;
- Justification for and accuracy of existing Traffic Regulation Orders; and
- Accuracy and quality of traffic signs and road markings that restrict or permit parking

The **Traffic Management Act 2004** imposes a duty on local authorities to manage their networks in a way that reduces congestion and disruption. It goes further, providing local authorities with additional powers related to parking.

The Department for Transport's **Full Guidance on Local Transport Plans** (December 2004) states that local authorities should have policies aimed at tackling congestion and changing travel behaviour, including possibly restricting and/or charging for parking.

The **National Planning Policy Framework** (March 2012) presents the Government's planning policies and how these are expected to be applied. The NPPF replaced a number of policies, including Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 13: Transport (January 2011) which includes maximum parking standards, and its key aim is to achieve sustainable development.

Darlington Borough Council's **Core Strategy** was adopted in May 2011 and forms part of the statutory development plan for the Borough. It provides broad, spatial planning guidance on the scale and distribution of new development, the use of land and buildings and the provision of infrastructure in the Borough over the next 15 years.

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The Core Strategy sets out 'higher level' planning policies for delivering the Sustainable Community Strategy vision for Darlington at a local level, guiding broad patterns of development and areas of restraint. Together these documents, with other plans and strategies (such as the Economy Strategy and the Housing Strategy) prepared by the Council and other agencies will help coordinate the future development of Darlington, ensuring that investment decisions are not made in isolation but are properly coordinated, focussing on the principles of sustainable development.

Darlington's **Third Local Transport Plan** was developed in partnership with the other Tees Valley Local Authorities (Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton on Tees). And is part of the, 'Tees Valley Transport Strategy'. Darlington's LTP3 sets out the Council's vision of how transport investment and other actions will contribute to improving local people's quality of life and support the long term vision for Darlington as well as sub-regional and regional objectives.

The LTP aims to create a transport system:

- to support national economic competitiveness and growth by delivering reliable and efficient transport networks
- to reduce transport's emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases with the desired outcome of tackling climate change
- to contribute to better safety, security and health and longer life expectancy by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness arising from transport and by promoting travel modes that are beneficial to health
- to promote greater equality of opportunity for all citizens, with the desired outcome of achieving a fairer society
- to improve quality of life for transport users and non-transport users, and to promote a healthy natural environment.





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## Did you know?

- 1 Darlington has a population of 105,000. A retail study produced in 2010 stated that 235,083 people live within Darlington's catchment area.
- 2 55% of Darlington residents have access to one car while a further 15% have access to two or more, however 29% do not have access to a car, highlighting the importance of public transport.
- 3 41% of shopping trips made by Darlington residents are made using sustainable transport modes.
- 4 There are currently more than 4000 off-street and 375 on-street car parking spaces within close proximity of the town centre – of these, around a third are privately operated and two thirds Council operated.
- 5 Overall there is sufficient supply to satisfy current demand although there is parking under provision, localised to popular car parks to the north and south of the retail area, such as Abbott's Yard, Commercial Street West and Winston Street South.
- 6 Demand for parking spaces in the town centre is predicted to rise by up to 34% by 2020 on Saturdays if all planned regeneration projects are developed – this means there will be a need for 1300 more spaces than there currently are in the town centre.
- 7 Saturday tends to be the day with the highest demand for parking, with Friday being the weekday with highest demand.
- 8 The most popular car parks on weekdays are Abbott's Yard Town, Hall, Commercial Street East and Park Place West. On Saturdays the most popular car parks are Abbott's Yard, Commercial Street East and Commercial Street West.
- 9 The current short stay charge in Council operated car parks is £1 per hour. The charge in the majority of long stay car parks is £4 per day.
- 10 Car park user surveys suggests that convenient location is the biggest single reason for choosing where to park but that the overall shopping and town centre offer is the biggest single reason for choosing a destination.
- 11 When surveyed, users of car parks in Darlington considered both the condition and security of car parks to be generally good
- 12 There are currently 15 Residents Parking Zones in Darlington.

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## What have we done?

- ✓ Introduced civil parking enforcement – at the end of 2010 Darlington Borough Council took over responsibility for parking enforcement from the Police.
- ✓ Introduced contract parking facilities for town centre businesses with daily need for operational use of vehicles.
- ✓ Funding available for transport to refurbish car parks which have suffered from wear and tear.

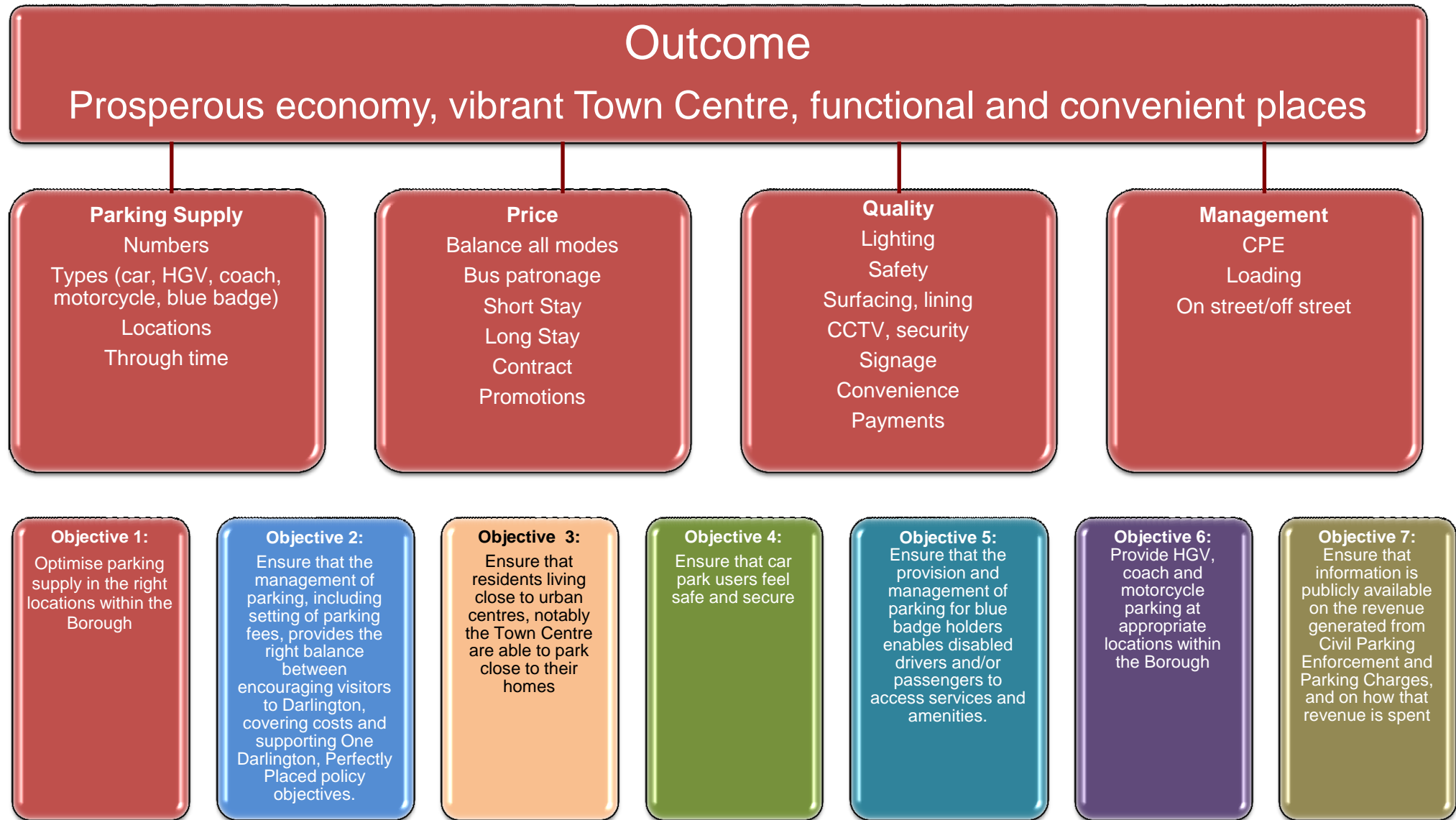
- ✓ Introduced Residents Parking Zones in residential areas around the town centre and Memorial Hospital to ensure residents can park near their homes.
- ✓ Allowed blue badge holders to park for free for three hours in off street car parks and on street, ensuring they can access services and amenities.
- ✓ Introduced discounted parking schemes around specific times of year, for example free parking after 3pm in the run up to Christmas.

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## Our challenges

- > How do we provide parking that positively contributes to the economic vitality of Darlington.
- > How much parking do we provide and where do we provide it.
- > At what level do we set parking tariffs to ensure value for car park users while also covering the costs of providing parking.
- > At what level do we set parking tariffs to encourage a balance of good behaviours between car parking for shoppers, workers and visitors whilst encouraging the appropriate use of all transport modes.
- > What's the best way to ensure turnover in the most popular car parks that benefits retailers.
- > What payment methods do we make available to maximise convenience and flexibility for car park users.
- > How do we best inform drivers of the car parking options available and therefore encourage parking at appropriate locations.
- > What do we need to do to maximise the safety of car park users and the security of their cars.
- > How do we work with partners and stakeholders to ensure parking meets users needs.
- > What do we need to do to cater for heavy goods vehicles and coaches that are important to Darlington's economy.
- > How do we ensure residents in streets around the town centre and their visitors are able to park close to their homes.
- > How much parking should be provided at employment sites such as Morton Palms to ensure sites attract inward investors.

## What will we do?





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## Town Centre Parking Model

The Town Centre is by far the biggest journey attractor in the Borough. The management of parking provision in the Town Centre and Town Centre Fringe needs to reflect the differing parking demands from shoppers / Town Centre Visitors, commuters and residents living close to the Town Centre.

**Figure 2** illustrates three distinct parking zones - an outer ring, an inner ring and town centre core, each of which has differing parking measures.

The **outer zone** contains a combination of Residents Parking Zones, low cost pay and display parking and long stay parking for coaches and heavy goods vehicles.

The **inner ring** will consist predominantly of long stay parking and potentially a multi-storey car park (incorporating pay on foot and electric vehicle charging points) in the Town Centre Fringe area.

The **town centre core** will consist of a variety of parking, including:-

- Time limited short stay parking
- Multi-storey car park in the Feethams area (to incorporate pay on foot and electric vehicle charging points)
- Free parking for blue badge holders in on and off street parking
- Contract parking for businesses
- Debit/credit card and pay by phone payment
- CCTV
- Motorcycle parking
- Signed and lit safer walking routes to car parks
- There are around 1400 Council operated short stay parking spaces in the town centre but predicted demand is expected to rise to more than 1700 by 2020.

## Our Priority Actions

	Outcomes	Actions	Timescale (years)			Financial Implications	
			Short Up to 2	Med 2 - 5	Long 5+		
1	Optimise parking supply in the right locations within the Borough	Action 1.1	Development of a multi-storey car park within the Feethams area to mitigate against loss of current supply and accommodate increased demands.	✓			Estimated £7 million (for 650 space capacity) funded through borrowing / capital receipts and parking revenue.
		Action 1.2	Development of a multi-storey car park within the Town Centre Fringe to support the regeneration of the area		✓		Funding through regeneration benefits
		Action 1.3	Development of a multi-storey car park in the Commercial Street/Kendrew Street area as part of potential Oval development		✓		Funding through regeneration benefits
		Action 1.4	Develop contingency plans to provide parking to replace that lost during the development of the proposed leisure complex, office building and multi-storey car park in Feethams	✓			Estimated £0.5M
		Action 1.5	Provide additional parking supply in Morton Palms area	✓			Estimated £410,000
		Action 1.6	Signage to be reviewed to ensure that it directs drivers towards car park locations	✓			£15,000 from LTP
		Action 1.7	Investigate and report on regeneration options for Skinnergate	✓			
		Action 1.8	Provide contract parking in the Town Centre for businesses with a travel plan who need parking for operational purposes	✓	✓	✓	Funded from permit sales



	Outcomes	Actions	Timescale (years)			Financial Implications	
			Short Up to 2	Med 2 - 5	Long 5+		
2	Ensure that the management of parking, including setting of parking fees, provides the right balance between encouraging visitors to Darlington, covering costs and supporting One Darlington, Perfectly Placed policy objectives	Action 2.1	Develop a range of tariffs and review them annually to ensure they remain competitive and deliver the desired outcomes of the strategy	✓	✓	✓	
		Action 2.2	Weekly, four weekly and annual tickets to be available either from ticket machines or by e-mail or telephone	✓	✓	✓	Funded from permit sales
		Action 2.3	Introduce time limits in some short stay car parks to encourage turnover and access to shops	✓			Estimated £5,000
		Action 2.4	Pay on foot to be implemented in all new multi-storey car parks and considered in other new car parks	✓	✓	✓	Within cost of development
		Action 2.5	Current pay by phone contract will be re-tendered ahead of its expiry. New technology explored to ensure that car park users in Darlington benefit from the most up to date methods of payment New machines to be installed with the facility to accept card payment (for transactions of £4 or more) – with the capacity to accept smart cards when introduced	✓			Pay by phone unknown until contract tendered, estimated £10,000 New machines estimate £150,000
		Action 2.6	Work with Distinct Darlington to investigate jointly delivering parking promotions and incentive schemes for the Town Centre that can be used for car parking and other purposes	✓			Estimated £18,500 (from parking revenue).

	Outcomes	Actions	Timescale (years)			Financial Implications	
			Short Up to 2	Med 2 - 5	Long 5+		
3	Ensure that residents living close to urban centres, notably the Town Centre are able to park close to their homes	Action 3.1	'High level' review of all RPZ's to prioritise timetable for interventions (Highways will continue on an ongoing basis to review requests for changes within RPZs on a case by case basis.)		✓	Estimated £15,000	
		Action 3.2	Detailed review of RPZ's on a case by case basis, implementing changes where required and supported by majority of residents living within the RPZ.		✓	✓	Estimated £25,000 per RPZ
		Action 3.3	Introduce visitor permits and a new process for issuing trades permits for use in RPZ bays	✓			Cost funded through permit sales
		Action 3.4	Review charging structure for trades permits.	✓			Cost funded through permit sales
4	Ensure that car park users feel safe and secure	Action 4.1	Walk routes to car parks to be signed and lit to acceptable standards and CCTV to be installed where possible in off street car parks	✓	✓	✓	Costs unknown pending further work, taken from LTP budget
		Action 4.2	The principles of Park Mark accreditation or equivalent will be met in each off street car park	✓	✓	✓	£3,100 pa
		Action 4.3	Ensure all new parking meets current design standards	✓	✓	✓	Within cost of each new car park

	Outcomes	Actions	Timescale (years)			Financial Implications	
			Short Up to 2	Med 2 - 5	Long 5+		
5	Ensure that the provision and management of parking for blue badge holders enables disabled drivers and/or passengers to access services and amenities	Action 5.1	Continue 3 hours free parking in car parks and on street in the town centre for blue badge holders	✓	✓	✓	No cost
6	Provide HGV, coach and motorcycle parking at appropriate locations within the Borough	Action 6.1	Long stay parking for coaches and heavy goods vehicles to be provided at Chestnut Street	✓	✓	✓	No cost
		Action 6.2	Continue to provide free parking in dedicated bays with locking bars in short stay car parks and explore potential for installing locking bars in long stay car parks	✓	✓	✓	No cost to continue existing policy
7	Ensure that information is publicly available on the revenue generated from Civil Parking Enforcement and Parking Charges, and on how that revenue is spent	Action 7.1	Produce an annual report detailing income from CPE and Pay and Display parking and how the income is spent				

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## How will we know if we are making progress?

Appendix 1 sets out the detailed Action Plan required to implement the Actions identified above. For each Action we explain the rationale and set out the milestones to ensure delivery.

It is expected that the Strategy Objectives will remain valid for about five years. However, the detailed Action Plan will be reviewed annually. Completed Actions will be removed and any new Actions will be added before the Action Plan is re-issued.