
TOWN CENTRE PARKING – MULTI STOREY CAR PARK

Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Nick Wallis, Transport Portfolio

Responsible Director – Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek agreement on:-
 - (a) The operation of the new Town Centre Multi-Storey Car Park including naming of the car park, charging policy for blue badge holders, motorcycles and electric vehicles.
 - (b) Plans to continue to ensure that visitors are aware of parking options within the Town Centre, in particular during the run up to Christmas.

Summary

2. In December 2013 Cabinet approved the recommendation to construct a 650 space Multi-Storey Car Park to be accessed from Beaumont Street. Work commenced on the new car park in January 2015 and is progressing well.
3. To help support the Town Centre Economy, since Autumn 2014 the Council has offered an extra hours free parking in all off-street car parks for drivers paying for two or more hours parking. Parking tariffs have also been reduced in four car parks. It is proposed that a 'Free after three' parking offer is implemented on the four Thursdays before Christmas 2015. This is to support late night shopping in The Town Centre.
4. The MSCP has been designed with a small office space on the first floor, at street level on the north west corner of the car park. This is to accommodate the shop mobility function. Parking bays for disabled drivers have been located adjacent to the shop mobility facility. The MSCP will include 33 disabled parking spaces, four electric vehicle charging points and parking for six to eight motorcycles.

5. To help mitigate for the loss of parking due to the construction of the MSCP, in January parking was brought back into use on the car park behind the Town Hall and Bishopsgate House. This area of land will eventually form part of the River Skerne Park and flood defence scheme. The parking will remain in place until after the new MSCP opens.
6. The MSCP will be pay on foot, with ticket machines located within the pedestrian access area (close to the lifts/stairs). There will be a stairwell and lifts at both the south east and north east corners of the MSCP, each with a ticket machine.
7. Payment options will include cash, credit/debit card and mobile phone. There is also an option of issuing a parking permit available for regular users e.g. Town Centre businesses operational vehicles.
8. Pay on foot means that all drivers must either pay to have their ticket validated or hold a parking permit for the MSCP. Therefore unless issued with a pass or validated ticket all drivers using the MSCP will have to pay for their parking, including blue badge holders and motorcyclists.
9. Officers have considered the option of a blue badge holder's permit or installation of an automatic number plate recognition system at the MSCP barriers, with the car registration plate for each Blue Badge holder held in the system. Both systems are open to misuse and industry advice on ANPR is that accuracy of number plate readings can be a significant problem, particularly in winter months, with poor light and dirty number plates.
10. Options for managing parking by blue badge holders and shop mobility customers are explained in more detail within the main report.
11. It is proposed that short stay parking charges for the new MSCP are the set at the same tariff as the majority of the council operated Town centre Car Parks, currently £1.00 per hour on a Monday- Saturday (8:00AM – 6:00PM) and £1.00 all day on Sundays.
12. The MSCP has been designed to accommodate peak short stay parking demand in the Feethams area of the Town Centre. The highest demand for parking occurs on a weekend; based on historical levels of demand during the week there will be capacity to accommodate a number of long stay contract parking spaces, Monday – Friday.
13. A number of Town Centre businesses already pay for contract parking, for example on Beaumont Street West car park. It is proposed that the option of purchasing contact parking is extended to include use of spaces Monday - Friday within the MSCP.
14. Before granting contract parking the Council's policy is for the organisation to demonstrate they have a work place travel plan, have a requirement for operational parking and are taking steps to encourage use of public transport, car sharing, walking and cycling for travel to work. It is proposed that we maintain this policy. Through a charging policy that reflects the true cost of providing parking in a premium Town Centre location would expect business to try and minimise the

number of parking spaces required for staff.

15. Officers are currently working on a project to review and update the town centre car parking signage including the Variable Message Signs (VMS). The MSCP will provide parking information to the existing VMS system.
16. So that drivers can easily find the new MSCP it is important that the name of the car park is readily associated with its location within the Town Centre. Options considered for a name include; Beaumont Street car park, Dolphin Centre Car Park Feethams Car Park.

Recommendations

17. It is recommended that :-

- (a) That with the exception of shop mobility customers Blue Badge holders pay the same tariff for parking in the Multi-Storey Car Park as other drivers
- (b) That Shop Mobility are authorised to issue a free single use validated parking ticket for each customers.
- (c) That the cost of parking for motorcycles and electric vehicles are the same as that for other vehicles.
- (d) That long stay contract parking spaces are made available to Town Centre Business, with the decision on the maximum number of contract spaces delegated to the Cabinet Portfolio holder for Transport and Director of the Economic Growth Group.
- (e) That 'Feethams Car Park' is the name given to the new Multi-Storey Car Park
- (f) That a 'Free after 3.00pm' parking offer is implemented on the four Thursday's prior to Christmas 2015 in the Councils off-street car parks. (26 Nov, 3 December, 10 December and 17 December).
- (g) That Cabinet delegate to a Sub Committee of Cabinet, comprised of the Portfolio holder for Leisure and Local Environment and two other Cabinet members, the power to deal with and determine any objections to traffic regulation orders for the MSCP.

Reasons

18. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-

- (a) It would be difficult to stop the misuse of MSCP parking permits issued to all blue badge holders. Potentially leading to widespread use of the MSCP for 'free' parking by motorists who have access to the pass, but who are not eligible for a blue badge.
- (b) Industry advice on an automatic number plate recognition system at the MSCP barriers is that accuracy would be a significant problem. Another consideration is that as a local Authority operating under the Traffic Management Act

legislation the Council would not be able to enforce parking infringements after the event as the legislation does not allow the use of ANPR camera evidence in an Off Street location.

- (c) There is nearby alternative free parking available for blue badge holders.
- (d) The MSCP will provide the option of secure undercover Motorcycle parking spaces. Free motorcycle parking is available elsewhere in the Town Centre.
- (e) To maximise potential use of the MSCP during the week (Monday – Friday).
- (f) The MSCP is located close to the new Feethams Cinema and Leisure complex, a significant ‘point of reference’ at the south western edge of the Town Centre.
- (g) To support late night shopping in the Town Centre.
- (h) To enable decisions to be taken on any objections to the advertised Traffic Regulation Orders for the new MSCP.

Ian Williams
Director of Economic Growth

Background Papers

No Background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Owen Wilson: Extension 6305

S17 Crime and Disorder	Design of the multi storey car park meets ‘National ‘Park Mark’ secured by design standards.
Health and Well Being	(The MSCP is designed to meet the requirements of BS8300:2009 +A1:2010 ‘Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people – code of practice.’
Sustainability	The MSCP is replacing off-street parking spaces removed due to new development at Feethams. The car design meets BREEAM - 'very good' standard
Diversity	The Council and its appointed consultants have considered the needs of protected characteristic groups throughout the design process and construction of the car park. And have met with representatives of affected groups during the design process.
Wards Affected	Central Ward
Groups Affected	Town centre businesses. All Town Centre visitors arriving by car.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council’s budget or policy framework’
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The MSCP will help facilitate further development in the Feethams area and through providing good quality parking in the right location helps support the Town

	Centre Economy.
Efficiency	The recommendation within this report to allow some long stay parking within the MSCP on weekdays will enable the Council to better balance the need to maximise income whilst ensuring there is sufficient short stay parking capacity to meet periods of peak demand.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

19. In December 2013 Cabinet approved the construction of a 650 space MSCP to be accessed from Beaumont Street.
20. The decision to construct the MSCP was based on evidence on the demand for parking in the Feethams area and projected increases in parking demand associated with new cinema and leisure development.
21. In determining the number of parking spaces, consideration was also given to the potential for development on Beaumont Street East car park. A brief for development on that site is now in preparation.
22. Prior to the loss of parking spaces due to development at Feethams, there were 705 public parking spaces. With the new MSCP and Beaumont Street East car park there will be 770 spaces, reducing to 650 spaces when Beaumont Street East closes for development.
23. Based on 2012 occupancy data, collected before any disruption to the four car parks in the Feethams Area (Town Hall A and B, Beaumont Street East and North) peak parking demand occurs between 12.00 noon and 3.00pm on a Saturday, averaging 515 vehicles (Jan – Oct) rising to 650 vehicles in December.
24. Average peak parking demand at Feethams on a weekday usually occurs between 12.00 noon and 1.00pm, averaging 409 vehicles (Jan – Oct) rising to 510 vehicles in December. Prior to 2014 staff with Council parking permits accounted for around 120 of these vehicles.
25. The new Cinema development includes provision of 80 parking spaces; these are primarily for use by hotel guests.
26. Additional parking demand associated with the Cinema is difficult to forecast, other than weekends much of the peak demand for the Cinema will be in the evening when there will be plenty of parking capacity. Based on evidence from other similar developments and without accounting for dual purpose trips (e.g. shopping and a cinema visit) the peak parking demand from the Cinema and Leisure complex on a Saturday could fall in the range 200 – 250 vehicles.

27. The MSCP has been designed with a small office space on the first floor, at street level on the North West corner of the car park. This is to accommodate the shop mobility function. Parking bays for disabled drivers have been located adjacent to the shop mobility facility.

Management/Operation of the new MSCP

28. Operational management of the new MSCP will be the responsibility of the Council's Parking Management and Enforcement team, supplemented by monitoring and out of hours support from the CCTV Unit.
29. The car park will be pay on foot, with ticket machines located within the pedestrian access area (close to the lifts/stairs). There will be a stairwell/lifts at both the south east and north east corners of the MSCP, each with a ticket machine.
30. Pay on foot is considered a good option for Town centre parking as it avoids the pressure on motorists to return to their vehicle at a set time. Darlington's Town Centre Traders have expressed strong support for this system in place of Pay and Display.
31. Payment options will include cash, credit/debit card and mobile phone. There is also an option of issuing a parking permit available for regular users e.g. Town Centre businesses operational vehicles.
32. On arrival at the car park motorists will take a ticket from the entrance control point. Before leaving they will need to validate their ticket by paying for their parking at the pay on exit machines. There is then a set period of time during which drivers can exit the MSCP through the barrier at the exit point. This will initially be set at 15 minutes, if required the time can easily be changed.
33. The exit barriers will be monitored by CCTV and will have a help call facility linked to the Council's Control Centre. The helpline can be triggered by the user or if a vehicle is parked at the barrier for more than a pre-set time an alert to the CCTV Centre will trigger automatically.
34. Staff in the Control Centre will be able to open the barrier remotely in the event of a problem/emergency.
35. There is an option of issuing a parking permit available for contract parking. This would allow access/egress to/from the MSCP and can be set up so as to work only at set times, for example Monday - Friday.
36. Pay on exit does mean that all drivers must either pay for a validated ticket or hold a parking permit for the MSCP. Therefore unless issued with a pass all drivers using the MSCP will have to pay for their parking.
37. The MSCP has been designed so that it can be fully secured, so it can be closed overnight if required.
38. The Councils Corporate Landlord team will have responsibility for management of the MSCP building, including maintenance. The business case for the MSCP

included a budget of £100K per annum, to cover business rates and maintenance.

39. The MSCP has been designed to modern 'Park Mark' standards with good levels of lighting, CCTV coverage and high quality access for pedestrians.
40. As the main car park for the Feethams Leisure development the MSCP will be well used in the evening by customers of the Cinema and nearby restaurants. With some customers not returning to their car until the early hours of the morning. Consequently it is proposed that the car park is open 24hrs per day, though with the option of closure after midnight, should crime or antisocial behaviour become a problem.

Parking Signage

41. Local Transport Plan funding has been allocated to updating the Town centre parking signs. Officers are currently working on a developing a new signing scheme which will include the MSCP on the Council's Variable Message parking information signs.

Policy Proposals for the MSCP

42. To exit the MSCP all drivers will require either a pass or validated parking tickets. The technology used within the MSCP will support the issue of validated tickets at 'remote' terminals in addition to the standard ticket machines. So for example this could include the issue of tickets for shop mobility customers at the shop mobility office.
43. Options for Blue Badge holders are:-
 - (a) Give residents who hold a Blue Badge the opportunity to apply for a free parking permit for the MSCP.
 - (b) Install an automatic number plate recognition system at the MSCP barriers, with the car registration plate for each Blue Badge holder held in the system. The barriers would then open automatically for those customers. Blue badge holders would need to register their car number plate with the Council and remember to update the Council if they changed vehicle.
 - (c) Blue Badge holders using the MSCP pay for parking. An exception to this could be shop mobility customers, with the option of shop mobility issuing a validated ticket to their clients.
44. The recommended option for management of Blue badge parking in the MSCP is to have free parking for shop mobility customers. Validated tickets to be issued by shop mobility. With all other Blue Badge drivers parking within the MSCP required to pay the standard parking charge.

45. The reasons for this recommendations are that :-

- (a) Shop mobility customers are already paying for the hire of mobility scooter at the shop mobility office. The issue of a free parking ticket at shop mobility is a relatively easy process using either a plug in device on a PC terminal or mobile validation device. Issue of tickets would be automatically logged, so can be audited against the issue of shop mobility scooters.
- (b) It would be very difficult to stop the misuse of MSCP parking permits issued to all blue badge holders. Potentially leading to widespread use of the MSCP for 'free' parking by motorists who have access to the pass, but who are not eligible for a blue badge. There is alternative free parking available nearby for blue badge holders. There would also be significant administrative and enforcement implications with operating a permit system.
- (c) Current Traffic Management Act legislation on local authority use of ANPR means that the council would be unable to bring legal action against drivers misusing the system.
- (d) Industry experience is that with ANPR you expect at best accuracy of around 95% in ideal good conditions, introduce poor light, weather conditions and dirty number plates and the read rate significantly drops, potentially to as low as 65%. This failure would typically occur more frequently in the winter which is when accuracy is particularly important.
- (e) Another consideration is that as a local Authority operating under the Traffic Management Act legislation the authority would not be able to use ANPR evidence for enforcement.

46. The MSCP has been designed to accommodate peak short stay parking demand in the Feethams area of the Town Centre. The highest demand for parking occurs on a weekend, meaning that during the week (Monday – Friday) forecast levels of demand indicate there will be capacity to accommodate a number of long stay contract parking spaces.

47. Options for providing long stay parking are :-

- (a) Allow Council permit holders to use the MSCP – potentially up to 120 vehicles.
- (b) Make a limited number of long stay permits available for Town Centre employers to purchase for their employees to use Monday – Friday. The Council currently has a contractual arrangement with Modus allowing use of the Beaumont Street West car park.
- (c) Make a limited number of permits available for purchase by individuals on a long stay basis Monday – Friday only. With a minimum purchase of one month.

48. The maximum recommended number of contract parking spaces is based on evidence from parking demand in 2012, if Council permit holders are allowed to use the MSCP, 60 spaces would be open to other businesses.
49. In January 2015 with the exception of a small number of staff, Council staff with a parking permit have been directed to use East Street or Council long stay car parks and have not been able to use the Beaumont Street or Feethams car parks close to the Town Hall. This arrangement is now operating well, with most staff with a permit able to park no more than five minutes' walk from the Town Hall.
50. It is proposed that other than in exceptional circumstances Council Staff parking permits are not permitted for use in the MSCP. Reason being that Feethams MSCP is in a premium Town Centre location and Council permit holders are able to use their permits within several car parks less than five-ten minutes' walk from the Town Hall. In exceptional circumstances for example where staff are required to respond urgently such as for Lifeline service, or where a member of staff has a disability permit, parking will be accommodated close to the Town Hall.

Consultation

51. To inform the development of the Darlington Parking Strategy 2014 -2026, the Council has carried out detailed surveys and public consultation on parking in Darlington. Actions within the Parking Strategy include Provision of multi-storey car parks, including the proposed site at Feethams.

Outcome of Consultation

52. Agreement that there is a requirement to provide sufficient parking spaces in the town centre to meet existing and forecast demand for parking and that a pay on foot system is the preferred payment option for Town centre parking.

Financial Implications

53. The business case for the MSCP was covered in detail within a report to Cabinet on 3 December 2013. Policies and operational proposals set out within this report reflect the Council's objectives to provide high quality parking within the Town Centre, whilst also ensuring that the MSCP generates the income required to meet both the capital and revenue costs in the business case.
54. Cost of the late night 'free after 3' shopping promotion is estimated at around £25,000 in lost revenue.

Legal Implications

55. Under delegated authority to Assistant Director for Highway's and Capital Projects the Council will need to implement a Traffic Order for the new MSCP. Should any objections be received, it is proposed that these are considered by a special panel of Cabinet Members and the Assistant Director for Highway's and Capital Projects.

Risk Assessment

56. This management of Town Centre parkin is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.”

Equalities Impact Assessment

57. Individuals and groups with a protected characteristic have been consulted and their views were considered in developing the Parking Strategy 2014 -2026 and the actions within the strategy, including construction of a MSCP at Feethams.
58. Equalities implications have been considered during the formulation of the design of the MSCP to ensure the car park is compliant with the Equalities Act (2010), specifically the :-
- (a) The MSCP is designed to meet the requirements of BS8300:2009 +A1:2010 ‘ Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people – code of practice.’
 - (b) ParkAdvance™ hardware complies with the British Standard and specifically meets the requirement that the for ticket machines the height above the ground of the control, ticket release and of slots for coins, notes and cards should be at least 750mm and no more than 1200mm. All pay stations and terminals incorporate a Help intercom button – available for use by all users.
 - (c) As an added layer of assistance if a driver’s vehicle remains stationary for a set period of time at the entry or exit loop and alert is sounded in the control room alerting staff to a problem. Assistance can then be provided remotely via the help intercom and if required the barrier opened from the control room.
59. This report has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment and has been judged to have a positive impact overall. With the MSCP providing a significant security and access improvements in comparison to the previous Beaumont Street Car park.
60. Key points being that the MSCP :-
- (a) Has extensive CCTV coverage, linked to the Councils CCTV control room
 - (b) Is designed to meet modern access requirements for vehicles and pedestrians
 - (c) Has thirty three parking spaces for use by disabled drivers, located at street level adjacent to the shop mobility unit.
61. The decision to charge for Blue Badge parking within the MSCP will mean that drivers and passengers with a disability will be required to pay the same fee as other motorists. Equalities considerations have identified that this has a potentially greater impact on blue badge holders on a low income, but also that the impact is mitigated by the availability of free blue badge parking on-street and in other Council operated car parks.