

BERWICK PARKING STUDY & ACTION PLAN

Introduction

Northumberland County Council (NCC) commissioned a study into the existing car park capacity and usage in Berwick upon Tweed and to produce a strategy for meeting future parking needs. Parking is considered to be a significant issue in the town that is considered by some people to be a constraint on the growth of the economy and its sustainability. Free parking was introduced in 2014 but there is now a perceived lack of parking capacity that has several consequences.

Much of the parking in the town centre is provided in car parks managed by NCC, plus some significant private car parks and on-street parking. On-street parking is the responsibility of the highway authority (NCC) which carries out the enforcement of the on-street and off-street parking restrictions.

The study report sets out details of the existing town centre car park provision, usage and issues and goes on to forecast how this is likely to change in the future and what measures could be adopted to tackle existing and future parking issues. New data has been collected and consultation has been undertaken with local stakeholders to gain an understanding of existing issues, future changes and potential solutions.

In order to establish the existing parking situation within the study area in a neutral month, parking surveys were carried out on Wednesday 15th March 2017, a market day, Thursday 16th March 2017, a neutral weekday, and Saturday 18th March 2017 by survey specialists Streetwise Services.

To establish the existing parking situation in the peak summer period, further surveys were then carried out on Wednesday 5th July 2017, a market day, Thursday 6th July 2017, a neutral weekday, and Saturday 8th July 2017.

The surveys were between 0700 and 1900 on each day. The numbers and stay durations of parked vehicles were recorded using registration matching during hourly beat surveys.

The full report can be viewed on the County Council's website.

Existing Parking in Berwick

There are a total of 2725 four-wheel vehicular parking spaces within the study area. This breaks down into 880 spaces in Northumberland County Council operated public car parks, 223 spaces in private car parks in public use/use specific car parks and 1622 spaces in on-street or adjacent parking areas.

In March 10 of the 11 car parks exceeded 85% capacity, the maximum recommended for efficient operation, on at least one of the surveyed days. The car parks were busier during the July surveys than during the March surveys on a Wednesday and Thursday but less busy on a Saturday.

Growth in Parking Demand

New parking demand is expected to be generated by further development in the town and the surrounding area. New homes and the growth of the town centre will increase the demand for parking.

The study concludes that the demand for parking in Berwick is assumed to increase by approximately 3.7% by 2020, and 10.6% by 2030, based on housing and traffic growth forecasts. This is expected to lead to further capacity issues and overspill of parking into other locations, including surrounding streets.

Recommendations

The study report sets out a number of recommendations based on the evidence gathered. These are summarised below:

- 1) *Additional Town Centre Parking Spaces*: It is recommended that the following numbers of additional public parking spaces are provided:
 - As soon as possible 50 spaces
 - By 2020 187 spaces
 - By 2030 261 spaces

It is also recommended that the County Council continue to investigate ways of providing additional parking capacity at the railway station.

2) *Park & Ride*: A park and ride scheme could be introduced, though it is recognised that this is unlikely to be viable without reintroducing parking charges in the town centre.

3) *Parking Restrictions*: It is suggested that the current range of parking restrictions is too complex and should be simplified.

4) *Streets Outside the Town Centre*: The study predicts that the demand for parking on these streets will increase so opportunities should be found to provide additional parking and/or make better use of existing parking.

5) *Coach Parking*: The study suggests new locations for coach parking, however, this has been superseded by new provision at the Swan Centre and Walkergate.

6) *Disabled Parking*: The existing provision of disabled bays is in line with commonly used standards, however, additional bays are recommended in Tweedmouth.

7) *Electric Vehicle Charging Spaces*: With a view to the projected increase in electric vehicle use it is recommended that further spaces be provided.

8) *Direction Signage*: Additional direction signage is recommended to the Quayside car park at the Marygate/Golden Square junction (for traffic approaching from the north).

9) *Pedestrian Routes*: The report recommends improvements to address identified deficiencies in the existing pedestrian routes between car parks and shopping streets.

Stakeholder Engagement

The Consultant's report was made available to local County and Town councillors, local stakeholders, other Town and Parish Council's and the general public. A number of engagement sessions were then held throughout January 2018 with County and Town Councillors and other stakeholders to gather their feedback on the study report. The main comments were:

- Extending the temporary permission to use Castlegate overflow area for car parking is a priority. The loss of the use of this area will lead to a significant shortage
- Could provide a free multi-storey car park in Tweedmouth and charge in the town centre. This would encourage people to park and walk into town, freeing up spaces for shoppers and improving turnover.
- Discussion is required with Historic England about Castlegate. They may accept a well designed permanent car park. Consider extending the parking area further if possible.
- Consider improving the access to Castlegate car park. Traffic congestion occurs at busy times.
- Need more things to keep people in the town for longer and enhancements to improve the local environment. Too much parking could be detrimental.
- Would like to see more residents walking into town.
- Conflicting views on parking charges.
- Additional capacity should be sought at the Railway Station. Currently many rail passengers park elsewhere which reduces capacity.
- Parking within the town walls should be short stay, with long stay parking outside.

A record of the views received is attached in Annex 1. Further comments have been received via a dedicated Parking Study email address. A summary of these comments is attached in Annex 2.

Action Plan

The recommendations from the study and the feedback from stakeholders has informed the Berwick Parking Action Plan which is set out below.

BERWICK PARKING ACTION PLAN

The following table sets out the actions to be taken following the completion of the study report and stakeholder engagement. It describes the specific measures to be implemented with an indicative timescale. The County Council has allocated £10m in its Medium Term Financial Plan to fund a programme of improvements to parking provision in the county, which can be used to support the implementation of the proposed actions. The Action Plan will be reviewed annually.

Study Recommendation	Action	Time scale
Additional town centre parking spaces	B01 - Convert the Chapel Street Coach Park into a town centre short stay car park to provide additional town centre parking capacity.	April 2018
	B02 - Seek approval for a temporary planning consent to secure the continued use of the Castlegate overflow car park area for a further period of 3 years, whilst longer term solutions are investigated and developed.	May 2018
	B03 - Progress plans to provide additional parking in Castlegate car park on a permanent basis, if it can be demonstrated that there is still an overriding need to do so having considered alternative locations and transport strategies.	Jan 2019
	B04 - Progress negotiations with Network Rail in order to secure additional parking at the railway station.	Ongoing
	B05 - Investigate the potential for additional parking behind the Library on Chapel Street.	June 2018
	B06 - Liaise with Arch regarding the potential use of land off Walkergate/Coxon's Lane for additional temporary car parking pending its future redevelopment.	June 2018
Parking restrictions	B07 - Consider reducing the range of restrictions to make it easier and simpler to understand.	September 2019
	B08 - Convert part of The Parade car park to short stay to improve utilisation and turn over of spaces within the town walls provided some alternative long stay parking can be provided at the Arch site off Walkergate/Coxon's Lane.	August 2018
	B09 - Consider the conversion of the Quayside	August 2019

	<p>and Coxon's Lane car park to short stay following an assessment of the impact of the changes made to The Parade.</p> <p>B10 - Introduce a 24 hour maximum stay in long stay car parks.</p>	September 2018
Disabled parking spaces	B11 - Consider the need for disabled bays in Tweedmouth and implement if necessary.	June 2018
Electric vehicle charging spaces.	<p>B12 - Provide additional electric vehicle charging spaces in Chapel Street car park.</p> <p>B13 - Investigate the feasibility of providing more EV charging points elsewhere in Berwick.</p>	<p>July 2018</p> <p>Oct 2018</p>
Direction signage	B14 - Provide direction signage to the Quayside car park at the junction of Marygate/Golden Square for traffic approaching from the north.	June 2018
Consider reintroduction of parking charges.	B15 - Periodically review the position and options on charging in light of progress being made to address parking issues in Berwick.	Annually Nov to Dec
Coach Parking	B16 - Provide a new long stay coach parking bay at the Swan Centre in Berwick linked to the Church Street drop-off point, and 3 on-street short stay (2 hours) coach parking bays at Walkergate.	July 2018
Sustainable transport	<p>B17 - Continue to promote and provide infrastructure to encourage sustainable modes of transport through the Council's usual programmes, as a way of reducing demand for parking.</p> <p>B18 - Work with Berwick Town Council to ensure transport and land use issues are coordinated as part of the Neighbourhood Planning Process.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
Monitor and Review	B19 - Monitor progress with the action plan and undertake a detailed annual review to evaluate its effectiveness and update and consider additional actions as appropriate.	Annually Nov to Dec