

ALNWICK PARKING STUDY & ACTION PLAN - APRIL 2018

Introduction

Northumberland County Council (NCC) commissioned a study into the existing car park capacity and usage in the three town centres of Alnwick, Hexham and Morpeth and to produce a strategy for meeting future parking needs. Parking is considered to be a significant issue in the towns that is considered by some people to be a constraint on the growth of their economies and their 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 centres 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. As part of the study new data was collected and consultation was undertaken with local stakeholders in each town to gain an understanding of existing issues, future changes and potential solutions.

Parking surveys were carried out by a specialist supplier that carried out hourly beat surveys in each car park and on-street within the study area, where the registration numbers of vehicles were recorded in each parking space throughout each survey day (7am-7pm). This provides data on the duration of stay of each vehicle as well as arrival and departure times, occupancy levels and the turnover of each space. Some car parks could not be accessed on foot so cameras were used to record the entry and exit time of vehicles.

Surveys were carried out on three days in each town in Summer 2017 and another three days in Autumn 2017. These days were 'typical' weekdays, the Market Day and the Saturday of the same week.

In Alnwick the survey dates were:

- Weekdays - 16, 17 August & 19, 20 September
- Saturday - 19 August & 16 September.

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

Existing Parking in Alnwick

There are 14 car parks plus various streets where non-resident parking is permitted. Parking is free of charge in all of the public car parks and streets managed by NCC but there are time restrictions in some locations and these are controlled by a disc system. Drivers have to indicate their time of arrival on a disc that can be purchased for £1.00 from many outlets across the county and they must leave before the stated time limit. The central car parks are limited to a maximum stay of between 30 minutes and 4 hours with long stay parking on the edge of the town centre.

In total, there are an estimated 1,389 off-street parking spaces in the town centre study area (some spaces are unmarked so it is necessary to estimate the number). In addition, the streets that were included in the study area survey contain an estimated 225 parking spaces. The total town centre parking capacity is therefore 1,614 spaces.

In August across the combined town centre car parks there was very little spare capacity during the lunchtime peaks with an average occupancy of 90% at the busiest time (85% is a recommended maximum). By September weekday occupancy was a lot lower with a maximum of 60% across the combined town centre.

Growth in Parking Demand

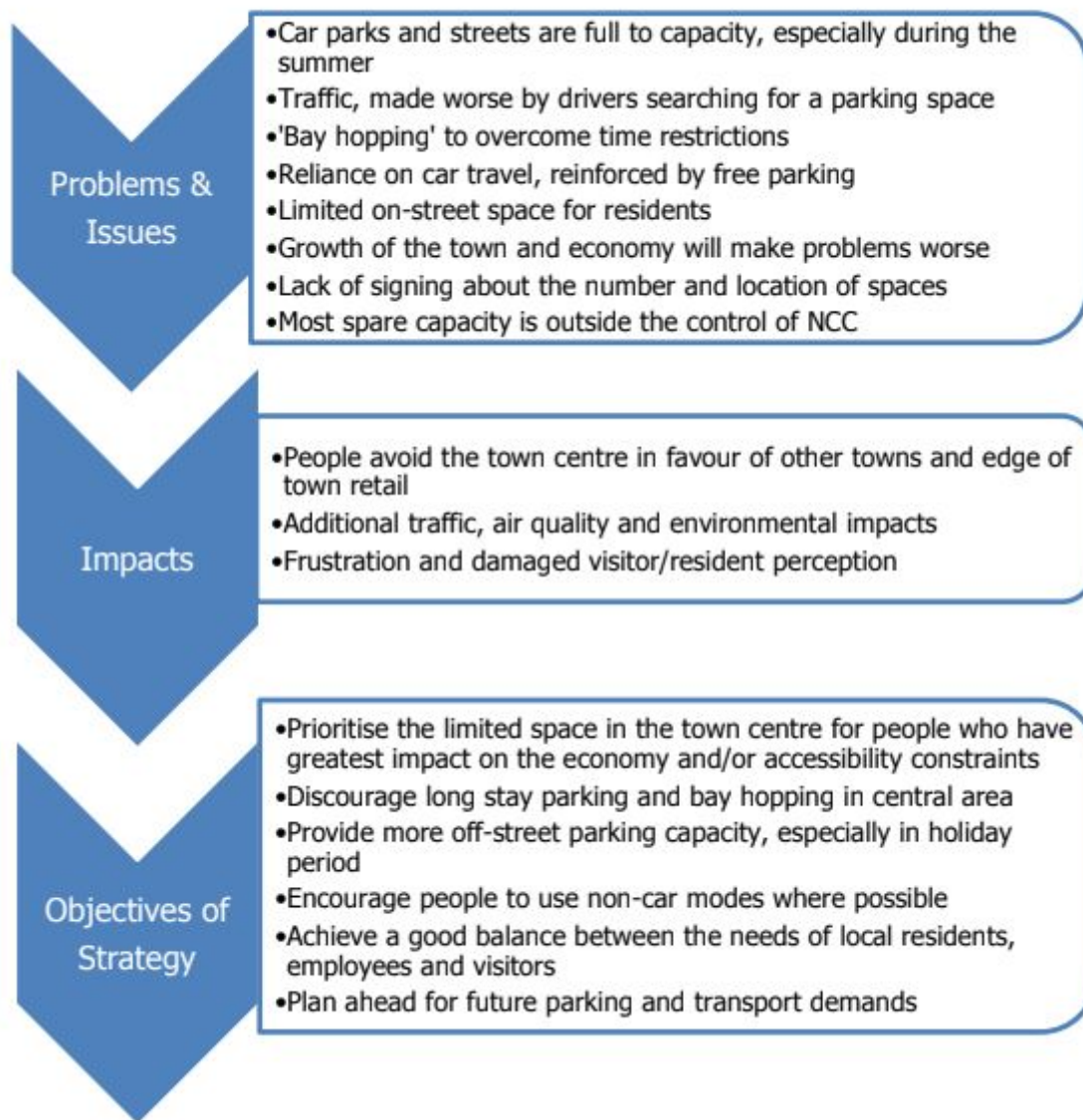
New parking demand is expected to be generated by further development in the town and the surrounding area. New homes and the growth of the town centre will increase the demand for parking.

The study concludes that the demand for parking in Alnwick is assumed to increase by approximately 1.1% per year in the future years, 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.

Issues & Objectives

As part of the study process, consultation events were held with local stakeholders who were invited to give their views on parking in Alnwick. The information gathered from these events, along with the data gathered from the surveys, was used to develop a list of problems and issues, associated impacts and suggested objectives. The list is shown in Figure 1, below.

Fig.1 Alnwick Issues & Objectives Summary



Interventions

The study then suggests the following interventions to address the problems and issues:

- 1) *Car Park Capacity*: Increase car park capacity to ease the current situation and provide for future expansion. An increase of 150 spaces is recommended to achieve an operational level of occupancy at peak times of the year..
- 2) *On-Street Parking Capacity*: Ensure changes elsewhere do not increase demand unless this can be mitigated through parking restrictions.
- 3) *Long & Short Stay Parking*: Long stay parking is restricting capacity for short stay trips which may damage the local economy. This is an inefficient use of a scarce resource and encourages reliance on the car. The reallocation of all day car parks to serve the short stay demand should be considered.

- 4) *Sustainable Transport & Park & Ride*: Greater use of sustainable transport would help reduce demand for parking in the town. There may also be options for seasonal park and ride during the summer peak that could be explored further.
- 5) *Condition, Facilities, Technology, Security & Maintenance*: The existing car parks were found to be in a reasonable condition with good facilities in most locations. However, directional signage to guide drivers was found to be potentially confusing for first-time visitors and improvements should be considered.
- 6) *Operations, Management & Enforcement*: Management and enforcement is considered to be reasonable. One issue is overnight and long-term parking.
- 7) *Marketing & Promotions*: Measures to spread parking demand and encourage people to visit the town at different times of the day and the year would be beneficial to the local economy.
- 8) *Parking Charges*: Free parking has had a major impact on travel and parking behaviour. There are benefits to free parking but it may have also increased reliance on car travel and contributed to congestion in car parks and on streets. This issue should therefore be explored and either discounted or pursued to give clarity and guidance on the other interventions listed.

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:

- There is too much long stay parking and not enough short stay to generate turnover. This has a negative effect on the local economy as it makes it harder for people to use local shops and services.
- Issues with residents parking overnight/all day which reduces capacity for shoppers and visitors.
- Parking issues are a seasonal problem but the tourist season is extending. It was considered that there is a greater need for short stay parking in the summer months to ensure turnover for local shops and businesses.
- The data on the existing parking situation was considered accurate.
- General agreement with Issues and Objectives listed but the 'problems' and 'impacts' are seasonal.
- There was some support for the use of parking charges as a policy tool to change behaviours, but only if this proved necessary after other options had been implemented. Any charges should include a 2 hour free period.
- There should be an objective to protect the town from the adverse effects of traffic and parking.

A record of the views received is attached in Annex 1.

Comments have also 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 Alnwick Parking Action Plan which is set out below.

ALNWICK 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 it's 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	Proposed Action	Timescale
Convert long stay to short stay parking.	A1 - Convert 80 long stay spaces in Greenwell Road car park A to short stay 3 hour spaces.	August 2018
	A2 - Harmonise Greenwell Road car park D by converting the 4 hour bays to 3 hours to increase turnover.	August 2018
Review on-street parking provision	A3 - Convert the short stay bays on Bondgate Within (outside Costa) from 2 hours to 30 mins to increase turnover.	August 2018
	A4 - Provide additional on-street parking in Pottergate through changes to the existing Traffic Regulation Order to remove double yellow lines. Will require consultation with directly affected residents.	October 2018
Increase off street car parking capacity	A5 - Reduce overnight and long stay parking by residents and businesses by introducing a 24 hour maximum stay to all town centre long stay car parks.	September 2018
	A6 - Investigate potential new car park sites at the old Duchess High School site and St Michael's school field.	September 2018
	A7 - Liaise with the Alnwick Garden regarding their role in helping to relieve town centre parking pressure, such as better use of their own internal car parks by staff/volunteers and progress other joint initiatives to make best use of public and private car park capacity where	On-going

	<p>appropriate.</p> <p>A8 - Investigate the feasibility of decking Greenwell Road car park D to provide an additional storey.</p>	Sept 2018
Seasonal time restrictions	A9 - Consider the introduction of seasonal time limits in the summer months so that there is more short stay capacity in the town centre car parks during the peak tourism period.	June 2018
Disabled parking spaces	<p>A10 - Address issue of problems caused by blue badge holders parking on the double yellow lines in Bondgate Within at Bailey's corner. Parked vehicles are preventing the safe operation of the junction.</p> <p>A11 - Undertake periodic review of disabled provision.</p>	<p>June 2018</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
Direction signage	A12 - Review car park direction signage, particularly at the junction of Hotspur St and Greenwell Road to give drivers more information on the location of parking spaces in the town.	<p>Review by June 2018</p> <p>Implement amendments by October 2018</p>
Enforcement	<p>A13 - Review parking zone map signage and clarify the status of the 'footpaths' on Bondgate Hill Cobbles. Any physical changes on the ground will require conservation input.</p> <p>A14 - Review parking signs and surface markings in the Market Place to ensure enforcement can be carried out.</p>	<p>August 2018</p> <p>July 2018</p>
Sustainable transport	<p>A15 - Investigate the feasibility of providing more EV charging points and cycle parking.</p> <p>A16 - Ensure new developments make suitable provision for public transport through the planning process, e.g. road layouts that facilitate local bus services.</p> <p>A17 - 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>October 2018</p> <p>Immediate</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
Consider	A18 - Periodically review the position and	Annually Nov to

reintroduction of parking charges.	options for charging in light of progress being made to address parking issues in Alnwick.	Dec
Summer park & ride	A19 - Commission a detailed options appraisal for a seasonal park and ride service with Alnwick Town Council and the Alnwick Garden during 2018, for consideration in summer 2019.	July 2018
Other	A20 - Resolve ownership issues and implement improvements to Roxburgh Place car park	Summer 2019
Monitor and Review	A21 - 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