



Subject:	Car Parking Strategy – Public Consultation
Date:	12 th April 2017 (deferred from March Committee)
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Anne Doherty, Planning & Transport Officer

Is this report restricted?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the outcome of the public consultation on the Council's draft Car Parking Strategy, seek endorsement from Members on the proposed final Strategy and outline next steps for implementation.
1.2	The Strategy makes recommendations relating to Council owned car parks as well as car parking provision outside our ownership. A key component of the Strategy is to facilitate and encourage stakeholders to work together to achieve the vision and objectives. The Council wishes to provide a strong civic leadership role for the promotion of a modern, safe, accessible and integrated transportation system for the city of Belfast and its wider regions.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• note the main issues raised during the public consultation process;• agree the Council's recommended position on how these will influence the final Strategy content; and• endorse the final Strategy for publication and note the proposed next steps for the

	implementation of the action plan.
3.0	Main report
	Public Consultation
3.1	The draft car parking Strategy was published for public consultation on the Citizen Space platform from the 30th August 2016 to the 21st November 2016 and received 84 consultation responses with 11 additional responses received outside the Citizen Space platform. A public consultation event was held in City Hall on the 4th October 2016 which was open to Members, key stakeholders and members of the public and was attended by over 30 representatives.
3.2	The overall response from the public consultation has been supportive of the strategy in particular the strategy objectives and the Council priorities. The consultation requested views on the Council's vision outlined in the strategy <i>"Belfast is a city offering sufficient, high quality and appropriately located parking which supports economic development and regeneration within the city by balancing the requirements of residents, businesses, commuters and visitors."</i> 42% of respondents agreed with the vision whilst 38% disagreed. The general comments relating to the vision showed that car parking is a highly divisive issue with respondents either requesting that there should be increased car parking provision at lower cost or that car parking provision should be restricted in the city centre to improve the amenity for residents and visitors to the city. It is suggested that the vision remains unchanged as we are advocating a balanced approach to car parking provision in the city. The strategy recognises that car parking in suitable amounts and locations is vital for the city centre to function properly. A balance is therefore necessary between car parking and other transport modes and between the needs of short-stay and long-stay parking users.
3.3	It is clear that the relationship between parking availability, cost, length of stay and its effect on retail trade is a complicated and emotive one. Evidence from Christmas 2015 suggested that the Council's offer of free car parking increased congestion, reduced accessibility and may have had a negative impact on footfall and retail trade. The Council's decision in 2016 to work with Translink to improve and incentivise public transport as an alternative to free car parking whilst controversial has proved highly successful with BCCM reporting average sales up by 7.8%, footfall up by 4.8% and Translink reporting ½ million extra passengers travelling into Belfast over the Christmas period.

3.4	<p>There is currently a high volume of commuters (people going to work and parking all day) travelling by car to Belfast which is leading to problems of increasing congestion and associated emissions resulting in poor air quality in a number of areas in the city. It is recognised that there is limited capacity in the city's highway network and therefore the promotion of public transport along with appropriate provision for cars and a rationalisation of car parking is part of a balanced approach is outlined in the strategy. The Strategy also puts an emphasis on access for consumers and short business use.</p>
3.5	<p>The public consultation responses showed strong consensus on the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the need to introduce residents' parking schemes in areas affected by all day commuter parking (a responsibility of DFI);• the proposal for consolidation of low quality surface car parking sites into multi storey/underground car parks with the caveat that adjacent local communities are consulted on the location and design;• the setting up of a Parking Forum with a number of groups expressing a willingness to participate in the Forum;• the need to improve quality, safety and security of car parking provision and to encourage car parking operators to achieve Park Mark standard;• the need to improve the information on parking availability and use of smart technology; and• measures to deter all day commuter parking in free car parks at district centres to allow turn over and provision for shoppers.
3.6	<p>A number of areas were highlighted that were missing from the strategy or needed more emphasis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the need to consult with local communities on any proposals to consolidate surface car parks and develop multi-storey provision;• improved enforcement to prevent parking at bus stops, parking across dropped kerbs, parking on pavements and to prevent potential fraud and misuse of Blue Badges; and• parking initiatives to promote the evening economy and provision to cater for overnight/weekend visitors to hotels travelling by car.
3.7	<p>The response from the Department for Infrastructure is generally supportive of the strategy and action plan, however, they would advocate for a clearer message on the need to reduce</p>

the supply of long stay commuter car parking in the city to support more efficient and cost effective public transport. They call for a more collaborative working approach on a number of issues which would be welcomed by the Council.

3.8 The response from the Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce outlined a number of areas of agreement in principle which include:

- support for control of commuter parking in residential areas;
- support for the extension of regulated on-street parking in the city centre;
- turnover of on-street car parking by better enforcement and appropriate charging and appropriate long stay car parking being provided;
- development of surface car parking sites;
- development of smart signage and parking app; and
- provision for coach parking.

3.9 However, BCTC have outlined a wide number of concerns in particular to any measures that will deter car access to the city. Their view is that a large number of shoppers and business users use the car to access Belfast and any steps to deter car access would be detrimental to city businesses. In addition, it is the view of BCTC that the current public transport system does not provide an adequate alternative. Council officers met with representatives from the BCTC to discuss the areas of concern raised. It was highlighted that the strategy recognises that car parking in suitable amounts and locations is vital for the city centre to function properly. However it is considered that a balanced approach is necessary between car parking and other transport modes and between the needs of short-stay and long-stay parking users. The strategy is in line with the Council's Regeneration & Investment Strategy and the Belfast Agenda which focuses on supporting vitality, jobs, shoppers, tourism and successful businesses in the city centre and therefore our approach is to support this, whilst acknowledging that there is a need to manage demand and in particular reduce all day commuter parking in the city. It should be recognised that a large number of city centre car parks are used all day by commuters and this reduces the availability of short term spaces for shoppers and visitors.

3.10 The strategy acknowledges that investment in public transport infrastructure and sustainable modes is necessary if car dependency is to be reduced and the Council is working jointly with DfI and Translink to support projects such as the Transport Hub, Belfast Rapid Transit and the implementation of the Belfast Bicycle Network Plan.

3.11	<p>The Department for Communities response supported the Council’s vision, objectives and priorities for action. DfC would concur that car parking is an important resource that supports the economic and social vitality of the city, but as the strategy emphasises, the high proportion of all day commuter parking in the core of a city centre uses up valuable space that could be used for broader regenerative purposes and restricts parking opportunities for shorter term uses such as shopping, business and leisure activities, all of which are key to the future regeneration of the city centre.</p>								
3.12	<p>Appendix 1 provides further details on the main comments emerging from the public consultation process and our suggested response. Appendix 2 contains the proposed final strategy and action plan. It is proposed an executive summary will be devised for the final version.</p>								
3.13	<p>Implementation</p> <p>The City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy identified car parking as a major issue for Belfast City Centre and recommended that the Council works with the Department for Infrastructure to develop and implement a strategy for car parking for Belfast. Representatives from DfI have been involved in the project steering group and the process has involved engagement with a wide range of partners and stakeholders. The strategy has outlined a number of objectives and priorities for action which are dependent on external bodies such as DfI, Translink and private car operators to deliver. It is proposed the delivery of the action plan will be cross departmental with the City Centre Development Team taking the lead and involvement from the City & Neighbourhood Services department, Planning & Place and Property & Projects.</p>								
3.14	<p>The proposed next steps include:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="272 1462 1380 1968"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="272 1462 828 1514">Key next steps</th> <th data-bbox="828 1462 1380 1514">Lead Department</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="272 1514 828 1666">Publication of final Car Parking Strategy and action plan including timeframe for implementation</td> <td data-bbox="828 1514 1380 1666">City & Neighbourhood Services</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="272 1666 828 1921">Review of Council’s off street parking provision to consider issues such as pricing, operation and naming through the internal Parking Order Working Group</td> <td data-bbox="828 1666 1380 1921">City & Neighbourhood Services (already underway)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="272 1921 828 1968">Establish joint working arrangements</td> <td data-bbox="828 1921 1380 1968">It is proposed that the governance and</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Key next steps	Lead Department	Publication of final Car Parking Strategy and action plan including timeframe for implementation	City & Neighbourhood Services	Review of Council’s off street parking provision to consider issues such as pricing, operation and naming through the internal Parking Order Working Group	City & Neighbourhood Services (already underway)	Establish joint working arrangements	It is proposed that the governance and
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	with Dfl and consider priorities such as the review of the current city centre car parking provision/location and options to progress the implementation of residents parking schemes	delivery will be raised at the Transport Workshop meetings chaired by the Chief Executive with involvement from elected members, Council officers and senior officials from Dfl and Translink.	
	Establish the Parking Forum - Agree terms of reference and membership; and - agree priorities for action such as improved parking information/smart technology.	City Centre Development	
	Provide guidance to inform the development of the Council's Local Development Plan in terms of transport policy and the review of the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan.	Planning & Place / Dfl	
	Review of Council owned surface car parking provision to consider options for consolidation and redevelopment	City Centre Development & Property & Projects	
	Report to Strategic Policy & Resources Committee to outline resources required for the implementation of the car parking strategy action plan.	City Centre Development & City & Neighbourhood Services	
3.15	<p><u>Finance and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>If endorsed the recommendations will have future implications on Council revenue such as the potential loss of parking revenue, asset rationalisation of some car parks, costs of some improving some car parks or capital to build new ones and the introduction of charging in some free car parks in district centres and the introduction of free disabled car parking in Council owned off-street car parks. These have not been quantified in the research and will be reported to a future Strategic Policy & Resources Committee once the strategy is finalised.</p> <p><u>Equality & Good Relations Implications</u></p>		

3.16	Equality and good relations screening was conducted in parallel with the proposed consultation processes.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Summary of public consultation responses Appendix 2– Proposed Final Car Parking Strategy and Action Plan