

# Lichfield City Centre Car Parking Strategy



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## Vision

*“To have a parking estate which meets the needs of the city, its residents, businesses and visitors, that supports the objective to be a vibrant city centre. To provide a parking estate that is sufficiently funded by an appropriate regime and is constantly monitored, maintained and updated to ensure it remains fit for purpose in the modern day”.*

## Introduction

This car parking strategy aligns with the Lichfield City Centre Masterplan, which is designed to shape the future growth of Lichfield city centre, setting out opportunities for enhancing the quality of the city centre environment and the range of different uses it offers, and provide a prospectus for investment in Lichfield.

## Background

In March 2020 Lichfield District Council endorsed the Lichfield City Centre Masterplan as the basis of a 20 year development programme for Lichfield city centre. Our masterplan sets out a vision and strategy for growth and investment including key sites for development and a number of strategies which would support the former but also lead to other potential projects.

Following member endorsement of the masterplan a detailed framework of delivery was formulated. A key aspect of the work programme is the formulation and adoption of strategies based on specific themes, such as car parking. In addition to underpinning future plans for the overall city centre and how it looks and functions, these strategies will help inform consideration of future development options for sites identified in the masterplan as well as other opportunities that may present themselves over time.

## Summary of issues

The long term sustainability of Lichfield city centre for people to shop, work, play and access services and facilities is an important consideration. Currently people access and move around the city centre in many ways via the private car, public transport and by walking and cycling. Public car parks serve the city centre and provide for short and long stays. There are approximately 2,133 available off-street car-parking spaces (including 70 disabled spaces) situated in and around Lichfield city centre. Of these 2002 are owned by Lichfield District Council and 131 parking spaces are available at the Three Spires Shopping Centre car parks located on the periphery of the city centre.

## 2020 Highways and Transportation Consultants

2020 Highways and Transportation Consultants (“2020”) were commissioned in January 2021 to undertake a study of our current car parks with a view to proposing a number of interventions that could be implemented to support our long-term approach to car parking within Lichfield city centre.

The work undertaken by 2020 considered current parking trends, national and local policy and engagement with key stakeholders and members of the public to develop an empirical evidence base that supported the proposal of a number of Interventions that are primarily focussed around the following:

- Parking capacity
- Quality of car parks
- Parking charges
- Car park designation
- Sustainable transport
- Car park technology
- Car parking enforcement

The document developed by 2020 Highways and Transportation Consultants has been used to support the development of our car parking strategy.

## National and Local Policy Context

Parking plays an important role in providing for and facilitating the key economic and service functions of a city by allowing for access by car. Parking is particularly important for a city with important regional functions like Lichfield providing services for and reliant upon a population drawn from a wider catchment area than its immediate vicinity, many of whom may live in relatively dispersed / suburban locations, distant from key services and often difficult to connect by public transport.

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Whilst under-provision of parking can be detrimental to the economic and social functions of a city centre, an over-supply can be similarly damaging. Parking is often space intensive, occupying land that could otherwise be put to an alternative, arguably more beneficial use. Areas of land set aside for parking and associated highway and access structures often sever important links for pedestrians and cyclists and increase the distances between facilities and amenities.

The increased requirement for car access associated with increased parking levels (often in constrained and environmentally sensitive central urban locations) implies increased congestion, delay and environmental degradation.

Such issues are specifically identified within the Lichfield Local Plan Strategy and the Lichfield City Centre Masterplan that highlight a lack of coherent pedestrian connectivity through the city, with an improvement required for pedestrian and cycle routes and cycle parking facilities to help to encourage people to walk and cycle and utilise public transport services, rather than rely on the private car.

The supply, location and cost of parking is inter-connected with, and impacts upon, initiatives and measures to encourage travel by sustainable modes and can conflict with wider, strategic measures to encourage economic growth. For example, reducing the marginal price of parking may act to reduce the cost of travel by car and therefore make the city more accessible in one way. However, if the result of this policy were to lead to substantially more demand for parking and reliance on car travel to access the city centre, it may conversely increase delay, congestion and pollution thereby reducing the attractiveness of the city centre.

Parking standards for new development and policies for car parks are also key issues to be considered within the parking strategy. Local and national policy is in place that provides the framework for decisions about the levels of public and private parking to be provided by new developments.

### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

This Parking Strategy was developed in accordance with [paragraph 106 of the NPPF \(2018\)](#) which states: *“In city centres, local authorities should seek to improve the quality of parking so that it is convenient, safe and secure, alongside measures to promote accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.”*

### Lichfield Planning Policies

The Lichfield District Local Plan Strategy was formally adopted in February 2015 and establishes a long-term strategy to manage development, provide services, deliver infrastructure and create sustainable communities. The strategy consists of a vision and strategic objectives, a spatial development strategy, core policies and development management policies and sets out how the strategy will be implemented and monitored.

This is complemented by the [Lichfield City Centre Masterplan](#), which is not a policy document, but seeks to shape the future growth of the city centre, set out opportunities for enhancing the quality of the city centre environment and the range of different uses it offers, and provide a prospectus for investment in Lichfield.

The [Lichfield District Local Plan Strategy \(2008-2029\)](#) identifies the city centre as the strategic centre in the District and will be will be protected and strengthened. As a result of this, it is proposed to be the focus for major growth in city centre uses, such as shopping, offices and leisure activities, as these serve a wider area than their own immediate population.

### Additional Supporting Documents

- [Local Plan Evidence Review \(Lichfield District Council\)](#)
- [Economic development strategy 2016 - 2020 \(lichfielddc.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Supplementary Design Sustainable Planning Document \(lichfielddc.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Infrastructure delivery plan \(Lichfield District Council\)](#)
- [Lichfield District integrated transport strategy – \(Staffordshire County Council\)](#)

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## Objectives

Our objectives for this strategy, are to:

- *Provide sufficient parking capacity that will support city activities and the local economy, including a range of parking offers to suit different needs.*
- *Provide appropriately located long and short term parking provision that encourages an even use of all car parks.*
- *Provide car parking which is easy to locate, access and safe to use.*
- *Provide car parking that offers a range of convenient payment options for the user.*
- *Support carbon reduction and air quality management goals by providing the infrastructure for additional electric vehicle charging.*
- *Provide for a fee charging structure which appropriately balances customer expectations as to the quality of experience with the costs of maintenance, management of, and investment in, the current car park estate.*

To make sure Lichfield's car parking provision remain fit for purpose the strategy will focus on the following topics.

### **Parking Capacity**

Whilst there are a number of city centre car parks that are more popular than others, there is sufficient parking space available across the city to cope with the current demand.

With car ownership increasing and a number of new housing developments being constructed within Lichfield District, it will be necessary to monitor this with a view to implementing interventions as necessary to manage future demand. It is therefore essential that the following actions are undertaken.

- *Develop a car parking policy which considers the future provision of the car parks in tandem with the consideration of interventions that can be implemented to manage demand.*
- *Ensure there is sufficient capacity to accommodate needs year round.*
- *Ensure that an appropriate mix of both long and short stay parking provision is available for users.*
- *To introduce a mechanism where drivers are able to easily locate available parking spaces.*
- *Consider appropriate car parks where capacity might be increased.*
- *Consider appropriate locations where additional permanent car parking might be introduced*
- *To ensure parking is available to cope with spikes in demand (e.g. Events, festival weekends, Lichfield Bower Day).*
- *Consider appropriate locations where additional temporary car parking might be introduced to help manage short term spikes in demand (e.g. Events, festival weekends, Lichfield Bower Day).*
- *To implement appropriate interventions that can be used to manage car park demand.*
- *Rationalise the usage of car parks to increase the occupancy in underutilised car parks.*

### **Location**

Our current car parks are well located, are easily accessible and allow users quick access to all areas of the city. The following actions will need to be considered to ensure that this remains the case.

- *Ensure car parks are well signposted so drivers can easily locate them.*
- *Ensure that access and exit from the car parks to the city is well signposted, maintained and accessible for all.*
- *Ensure that information about the city centre and nearby facilities is available within each car park.*
- *Implement appropriate interventions that can be used to manage car park demand during busy periods of use.*
- *Ensure existing short stay and long stay spaces are situated in the most suitable locations for the user.*

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## **Car Parking Charging**

A benchmarking exercise carried out by 2020 Transport Consultants highlighted that both short-stay and long-stay parking charges in Lichfield are favourable, with none of the benchmarked locations offering a complete parking offer that was lower cost than Lichfield. It is essential that the current charging structure remains fit for purpose. To ensure this the following actions will be undertaken.

- *Ensure fees suitably reflect the experience and are appropriate with accessing the city centre and its services and facilities available.*
- *Implement appropriate parking charges to encourage and increase use in underutilised car parks.*
- *Ensure parking charges are being made at the appropriate times.*
- *Benchmarking exercises regularly carried out to determine how parking charges in Lichfield District compare to neighbouring cities and towns.*

## **Technology**

Advancements in technology significantly improve the customer experience of using car parks. It is imperative that technological interventions are considered and implemented as necessary to ensure the current car parks improve the customer experience and remain up to date and fit for purpose.

- *Introduce convenient payment systems that make transactions quicker and easier.*
- *Introduce convenient payment systems that encourage users to stay longer in the city.*
- *Introduce a mechanism so that drivers are able to easily locate available parking spaces.*
- *Increase the current provision for Electric Vehicle charging.*

## **Quality of parking experience**

The car park is often the first place a visitor to Lichfield will see. It is important that the quality of current car parks are set to a high standard. With that in mind we will endeavour to:

- *Ensure our current car parks are well maintained.*
- *Ensure our car parks are easy to navigate with improved driver directional lining and signage.*
- *Ensure our car parks provide a safe and secure environment for both drivers and pedestrians.*
- *Ensure relevant advice and guidance is provided either in the car parks themselves or via other suitable channels.*
- *Spaces are made available that can accommodate all vehicles.*

## **Enforcement**

We acknowledge that car parking enforcement is an important customer facing service and it is crucial to provide the best and most effective way of delivering the service. To make sure this remains the case the following actions will be undertaken.

- *Ensure the number of Civil Enforcement Officers is appropriate to support the efficient operation and management of our car parks.*
- *Ensure all car parking payment equipment is regularly checked and maintained so it remains in good working order.*
- *Ensure up to date driver, pedestrian and visitor advice and guidance is provided in our car parks.*
- *Enhance traffic management and safety of pedestrians within the car parks.*
- *Utilise appropriate software to provide system support and enhance the efficient operation of the payment systems.*

