



Lancaster City Centre Draft Car Parking Strategy Consultation Report



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The council has recently agreed its Council Plan 2024-2027 which identifies a range of aims and objectives centred on the following themes:
 - *A Sustainable District* – centred on the theme of taking action to meet the challenges of the climate emergency.
 - *An Inclusive and Prosperous Local Economy* – building a sustainable and just local economy that benefits people and organisations
 - *Healthy and Happy Communities* – empowering and supporting healthy ways of living, and tackling the causes of inequality
 - *A Co-Operative, Kind and Responsible Council* - bringing people together to achieve the best outcomes for our communities, in tandem with running efficient quality public services.
- 1.2 A number of policy strategies, initiatives and actions delivering against these objectives are either already agreed and ongoing or are subject to further strategy and policy work. Ongoing work includes actions agreed to progress the Canal Quarter Masterplan (adopted by Full Council in July 2023), intended to enhance Lancaster’s role in the local economy and boosting its housing, commercial, cultural and leisure offer.
- 1.3 Over the next 10 to 15 years, it is envisaged that key under-utilised sites and dereliction across the Canal Quarter area will be addressed, and development progressed for a mix of uses that will complement the existing town centre and provide for balanced place-making. Crucially, it was agreed that the council’s preference was to put selected surface car parking assets to housing development, with a focus on the provision of affordable and social housing. The council has progressed early phase housing initiatives for specific surface car parks under this policy direction.
- 1.4 The Canal Quarter Masterplan (and its underpinning Canal Quarter Supplementary Planning Document) were subject to wide stakeholder and community consultation and Member scrutiny. However, in late 2023 Members responded to concerns raised by Lancaster’s business community on potential implications of the progression of the Canal Quarter regeneration plan, which implies a long-term net loss of car parking in the area in favour of housing delivery.
- 1.5 The local business concerns were both strategic and specific:
 - Concerns were raised on the potential negative impact on the city economy and implications for city centre accessibility for those individuals/populations underserved by public transport and who depend on their car for business and leisure purposes.
 - The needs and customer base of specific businesses, particularly cultural sector and evening economy, whose customer base tend to rely on private car in the absence of other alternatives.
- 1.6 Balancing the need and demand for accessible parking with the city's goals for sustainable transportation is a complex and multifaceted challenge. The draft Lancaster City Centre Parking Strategy and Action Plan sought to both

address business concerns, enable progress on and facilitate city council and wider public policy objectives, and to move the issue of car parking provision to the centre of the sustainable transport and travel discussion.

1.7 In preparing the Strategy officers referred to a wide range of current policy documents. Reference has also been made to best practice including:

- Local Government Association – Travel Parking and Access toolkit
- Department for Transport – Active Travel: local authority toolkit

2 Background and Methodology

- 2.1 The city council's public off-street commercial parking portfolio is one element of total publicly available car parking provision in the city centre. This includes private commercial provision, and both on-street parking and the Park & Ride (P&R) at the M6 junction 34 operated by Lancashire County Council.
- 2.2 The city's parking provision – and the city council's own role in it - has generally developed in an unplanned and ad hoc fashion. Multi-storey car parks (MSCPs), both private and publicly owned, are located centrally, being built alongside and to service major retail and commercial developments in the late 20th century. Public surface car parking provision is scattered in and around the edge of the city as a result of patchwork building demolition and, on the Canal Quarter, the mid-century public acquisition of buildings/land and clearance for an intra-urban highway scheme which never materialised. The P&R itself was initiated as part of the Bay Gateway plan to service Lancaster from the motorway but came with no supporting bus priority infrastructure along Caton Road.
- 2.3 City council provision is generally low to medium quality and structural repair requirements and maintenance issues are present in the council's existing MSCPs and surface car parking portfolio. The Castle car park is currently closed due to falling concrete. Major capital investment in the existing portfolio or new provision has not been considered in decades and the portfolio provides insufficient amenity for low emission modes such as electric vehicle charging or secure cycle storage.
- 2.4 The MSCPs offer poor customer experience, suboptimal vehicle ingress/egress, and confusing pedestrian circulation routes. The portfolio can be characterised as being in the wrong place – as it encourages polluting vehicle movement around the gyratory and city centre generally. However, from the point of view of pure accessibility and utility for the private car user – both for commuting and leisure purposes – the provision broadly functions well in spite of its quality shortcomings.
- 2.5 From an asset management perspective, the city council has mainly viewed the parking portfolio through a commercial lens, prioritising its role as a source of net income to support the range of city council statutory and non-statutory services. The role of car parking and public sector involvement in its provision, has not generally been considered against the wider objectives of either city council or any other public policy agenda. Perhaps surprisingly, approved sustainable transport and travel policy is relatively silent on where and how parking fits in with the district's future sustainable travel and transport vision.
- 2.6 The draft Strategy and Action Plan takes a view that car parking assets and the city council's role in provision should be treated the same as any publicly provided resource and considered for its role in meeting overall policy objectives under the remit of the ongoing Outcome Based Resource planning.
- 2.7 The Strategy did not consider income / revenue implications on the council's budget for 2 reasons (refer to Financial Implications):
 - Where additional capacity exists in the current portfolio, a decision to remove a car park – up to a point and where there is capacity - be viewed as broadly neutral to the council's overall budget. Users (and their payment) can substitute to those underutilised car park spaces remaining in the portfolio. Surface car parking assets put to productive development will generate, to a lesser or greater extent, direct income (such as capital

receipt) and enable efficiency savings in management of the remaining portfolio mitigating any “leakage.” Removal of a car parking asset is therefore not a “zero sum game” for the council’s budget when considered against the wider portfolio of council commercial provision available.

- In providing new car parking, it is assumed that (permanent or temporary) provision would be broadly viable from a commercial business case perspective – that is, borrowing costs for capital build and ongoing running costs would be covered by gross income and potentially deliver a net surplus. There would be nuances and other considerations depending on the scale and type of provision envisaged, the proposed lifetime of the new asset provided, city council borrowing headroom and other cost/income variables.

2.8 However, accepting these general principles can allow Members and community/stakeholders to better consider the role of car parking in terms of its impact and contribution to wider objectives rather than having to focus solely on the city council’s budget and income imperatives.

2.9 The consultation sought to ascertain the views of residents, businesses and any other interested parties on the overall strategy and specific elements. The consultation asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with the strategy elements and provided opportunity for more general statements / comment. Generally, the council sought open responses. Closed questions control and limit the range of responses to provide quantitative data, open responses allow the freedom to outline specific issues and offer insight and knowledge of the main issues at hand. Respondents generally appreciate the opportunity to be candid their own words, knowing their opinions are going to be recognised and reviewed. Closed questions may be perceived as being leading, while open questions give respondents free rein inform, share, and provide context.

2.10 The council sought to engage with a wide range of individuals, communities, organisations, and stakeholders who may hold an interest in or may be affected by any redevelopment of the former Frontierland site. The consultation was conducted in several different ways to try and engage with the public and stakeholders. The following consultation methods were used:

- Briefings to all Lancaster City Members to enable them to confidently discuss the strategy site with their local communities and residents.
- Keep Connected, the council’s online consultation platform.
- Face to face consultation with specific Stakeholder groups who requested meetings: Lancaster Grand Theatre ; Lancaster Business Improvement District; Lancaster and Morecambe Chamber of Commerce.

2.11 The consultation was publicised widely using a variety of formats to try and reach as many people as possible. This included:

- Press releases to the local and regional news publications, both print and online.
- Social media.
- The council’s website via the news, Engagement Plan and Keep Connected pages.

- 2.12 Respondents were also asked to provide their postcode, with the option to omit 1 or more letters to allow their street to remain unknown. The consultation period ran from 11 March to 17 June 2024.

3. Key Elements of the Draft Strategy

- 3.1 The specific strategy elements that the council consulted on are listed below with an explanation after each as to what the objective is and what it is trying to achieve.

Key Facts: An overview of the evidence base on which the strategy relied

- 3.2 The city council's public off-street commercial parking portfolio is one element of total publicly available car parking provision in the city centre. This includes private commercial provision, and both on-street parking and the Park and Ride (P&R) at the M6 junction 34 operated by Lancashire County Council. The strategy contended there was good availability and surplus capacity observed at most times of the day / week / year enabling the majority of drivers to find a free parking space both at their convenience and for most times.
- 3.3 It was recognised however that officers are working with imprecise variables and information against an unplanned, poor-quality provision which is difficult to manage efficiently. Specific seasonal, school holiday and festival peaks put pressure on the portfolio, although little is done to mitigate or promote alternatives which could ease demand at these times. Some parts of the city centre portfolio are unpopular and underutilised (and vice versa), and the existing P&R and lack of bus priority and availability provides little incentive for its use in the face of broadly ample car parking provision for most car users.

Policy Framework: An overview of national, regional, and local transport, travel, and movement policy impacting on the way car parking is provided currently and in the future.

- 3.4 The strategy noted that sub-regional and local policy is visionary in its consideration of the future direction of travel and transport for the city. There is broad agreement and encouragement in policy for: reducing car use and penetration into and around the city centre; fewer city centre vehicle trips and substitution to public transport and sustainable modes; improving air quality, pedestrian amenity, and reducing accidents. However, the practical resources and a funded action plan to deliver against this policy agenda – and, crucially, what specific actions to be implemented and when they will be done – is less clear.
- 3.5 The levers and resources to deliver against the sustainable travel aims are generally outside of the control of the city council. Responsibility for strategy and major investment lies with Lancashire County Council as the local highway and transport authority with a major future role for improving public transport defined for the emerging Lancashire Combined County Authority. Specific reference to car parking provision and its current/future role in the economy and sustainable transport and travel agenda is largely absent. However, it is implied in policy that the current location and ease of availability and location of Lancaster city centre parking is

a major factor in facilitating congestion, harmful vehicle circulation, and does little to support alternative and lower emission travel modes.

Demand: Assessing the likely demand drivers for car parking in the future.

- 3.6 Car parking plays an important role in the city economy and accessibility particularly for less mobile/rural users and into the evenings where public transport options are limited or largely unavailable. Peak demand and use is broadly manageable with turnover largely allowing accommodation of vehicles without overt highway impact or impositions on driver utility. Accounting for future demand is complex due to the range of strategic, policy and local drivers in play. Increasing proportion of electric vehicles, use of mobile technology, adoption of autonomous vehicles sit alongside the broad policy agenda to “unclog” city centres and increase the number of trips made by low emission modes. Most vehicle trips to Lancaster (and therefore parking demand) are local in nature, originating from the LA1, LA2 and LA4 postcodes.
- 3.7 While this suggests there are opportunities for modal shift, strategic public transport improvements are likely to be achieved over the long-term rather than short/medium term. It is assumed that public transport options and quality of provision will improve but options to reduce flow volumes and car parking demand could prioritise “softer” car share and employer travel plan work as much as “hard” infrastructure to improve public transport priority. With county council / Combined Authority engagement, in the medium to long-term, public transport options will improve and contribute towards demand reduction. Ultimately, the continuing need for, and reliance, on private vehicles for many city visits into the immediate future must be accepted. As the various demand push and pull factors play out demand for city car parking is therefore expected to be relatively consistent and needs to be accommodated.

Supply: Assessing the likely supply drivers for car parking provision in the future

- 3.8 The existing council provision is an important, albeit not sole, element of wider city centre parking provision. The council has also taken on the role of parking provider more by accident than design. There are specific issues / costs associated with maintaining the existing MSCPs and surface car parking portfolio developing which need to be addressed for the long-term. The strategy acknowledges the need for a reasonable and optimal quantum of parking provision for the city’s needs but also notes that developing future permanent, higher quality, more sustainable parking solutions in better locations will be challenging.

Strategy Positioning: Explaining the “poles” or extremes of approaches to car parking policy

- 3.9 The strategy takes a position between and elements of both “Decide and Provide” and “Predict and Provide”. Incorporating measures that best meet overall council policy objectives without significantly impacting and actively assisting otherwise potentially competing wider public policy aims.

Key Aims: What the strategy aims to achieve

3.10 The strategy seeks to:

- Provide parking in the right locations reducing need for circulation/penetration into, through and around the city centre by private vehicles.
- Provide sufficient parking options to service the needs of the evening and cultural economy.
- Provide high quality and safe car parks (for both vehicles and users) which are attractive to customers.
- Ensure sufficient provision in good locations for blue badge holders, with a target of 6% as per Department for Transport recommendation.
- Promote the optimum use of land in support of the broad aims and objectives of city, county council, and other public policy objectives.
- Help inform transport strategy, development decisions, and planning applications. Manage peak car park use by promoting alternative options.
- Ensuring the permanent car park offer is fit for the future; particularly use of electric vehicles and provision for alternative modes (cycle parking/car share hubs) and active travel amenity such as secure cycle storage.
- Provide a short term (up to 2 years) medium term (up to 7 years) and long term (10 years) action focus.

Action Plan: The specific actions required in order to achieve the strategy aims.

3.11 The Strategy proposes the following:

Short to Medium Term

- The city council aims to provide a portfolio of 1,400 to 1,500 publicly operated off-street spaces to meet to provide sufficient capacity for current identified peak demand.
- Fixing/changing utility of parts of the council's existing Multi Storey Car Parks (MSCPs) and bringing back on-stream provision which is currently off-line (Castle car park)
- Temporary provision/replacement options developed and implemented while reflecting the aspiration for longer-term transport strategy improvements and permanent / better located car parking / transport hub provision planning
- Temporary edge of centre parking/movement solutions looked at to meet peak demands (e.g. for Festivals) and to encourage increased use of the existing P&R as "overflow"
- More efficient use of spaces by encouraging turnover and increased non-peak use to avoid "circulating" congestion on roads and waiting in car parks.
- Promotion of the use of modern technology for car parking payments

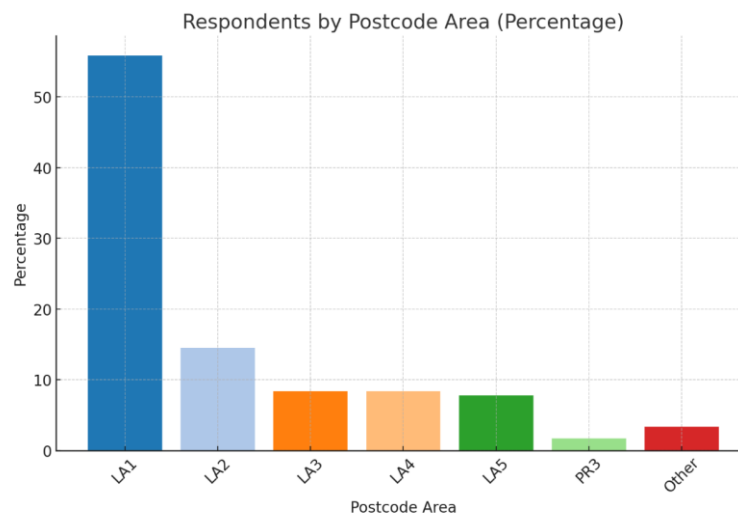
Long Term

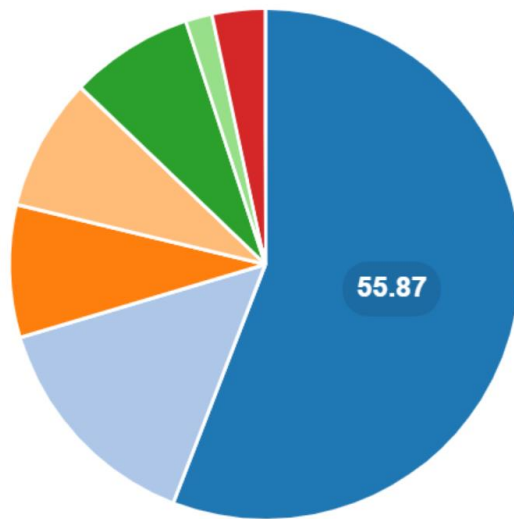
- Long term strategy for improved car parking provision and locations for city centre is agreed as part of wider public transport/alternative mode improvements and a strategic Lancaster Transport Vision
- Consider locations/business planning for replacement transport hubs/MSCPs at edge of centre locations

- Resolving strategic demand implications e.g. Eden Project Morecambe use of Park & Ride
- Implementing contingency plans for any economic/accessibility/ neighbourhood consequences of parking space loss
- Clarification of what role Canal Quarter land/uses to play in the strategic provision of car parking spaces (either in retention of land in current use for parking and/or as an area to locate new/replacement transport hub/MSCP provision)
- Ongoing and improved monitoring of car park usage to inform future decisions

4. Consultation Responses and Analysis

- 4.1 The Keep Connected webpage for the consultation received 1,731 visits. The total number of responses from all formats of consultation was 455. The survey questions received 195 responses alongside a total of 40 general email comments. Some respondents partly completed the questionnaire survey. In addition, some who completed the questionnaire gave separate email comments in addition.
- 4.2 The chart below shows the detailed postcode location of respondents, generally from Lancaster district postcodes. This is determined by the numeric value in the second part of the postcode. The greatest level of consultation responses was received from postcode areas closest to Lancaster city centre - the LA1 postcode area.





Key Facts Responses Summary

- 4.3 Some submissions expressed overall support for the car parking strategy, appreciating efforts to address parking issues and improve infrastructure. These commenters generally agree with the goals of reducing congestion, promoting alternative transportation, and enhancing urban planning. Conversely, other submissions outright reject the strategy, arguing that it fails to adequately consider the needs of car owners, especially in suburban and rural areas where public transportation is less viable.
- 4.4 Many respondents worry that increased parking restrictions and reduced availability of parking spaces will negatively impact their daily lives. This is particularly a concern for those who rely on cars for commuting and essential activities. There is significant concern about the potential financial burden of the proposed changes, including any potential for increased parking fees and fines. Some feel this disproportionately affects lower-income residents.
- 4.5 Several comments highlight implementation challenges, questioning the feasibility of the proposed measures. Issues such as the availability of alternative transportation options and the practicality of enforcement are commonly raised. Some submissions provide alternative suggestions, such as improving public transportation, creating more park-and-ride facilities, and increasing the availability of electric vehicle charging stations.
- 4.6 Proponents of the strategy emphasize the environmental benefits, such as reduced emissions and improved air quality. They support measures that encourage walking, cycling, and the use of public transport. Some comments also mention potential health benefits, including increased physical activity and reduced noise pollution.
- 4.7 There are concerns about the strategy's impact on disabled individuals. Commenters highlight the need for adequate disabled parking spaces and worry that new restrictions could limit accessibility for those with mobility issues. Similar concerns

are raised regarding older elderly people , with some submissions emphasising the need for greater focus on the mobility and accessibility needs of older adults.

- 4.8 Many comments focus on the potential negative impact on local businesses, particularly those in areas where parking is already limited. Business owners and supporters argue that reduced parking availability could deter customers and harm economic activity. There are also concerns about the impact on employees who rely on street parking, with some suggesting that inadequate parking options could affect workforce availability and productivity.
- 4.9 With regard to technology and infrastructure development some submissions suggest the use of smart parking technologies, such as real-time availability apps and automated payment systems, to improve efficiency and user experience. There is support for infrastructural enhancements, including better signage, improved lighting in parking areas, and the development of multi-level parking structures.
- 4.10 A significant number of comments advocate for improvements in public transportation as a complementary measure to the car parking strategy. Suggestions include expanding bus and train services, increasing frequency, and ensuring reliability. There is a call for better integration between the parking strategy and public transport planning to ensure a cohesive approach that genuinely reduces car dependency.
- 4.11 Several commenters feel that the consultation process was inadequate, urging for more community involvement and transparency in decision-making. There is a desire for ongoing dialogue and consideration of public feedback in the final strategy. Some submissions suggest that the public needs more information and education about the benefits and details of the strategy to gain broader support.

Summary of comments
<p>The general comments on this section do not generally dispute the key facts but reflect a wide range of perspectives on strategy elements, from supportive to highly critical.</p> <p>Key issues include the potential impact on residents, feasibility and effectiveness of any actions and solutions proposed environmental and health considerations, accessibility, economic implications, technological solutions, public transportation integration, and the consultation process itself. Addressing these concerns and incorporating constructive suggestions could help in refining the strategy to better meet the needs of the community.</p>

Policy Framework Reponses Summary

- 4.12 Many commenters argue that public transport in Lancaster and surrounding areas is inadequate, making car usage a necessity rather than a choice. They highlight the infrequency of services and the lack of suitable bus routes, particularly in rural areas, which forces residents to rely on cars.
- 4.13 There is a significant concern that reducing car parking availability in the city will negatively impact local businesses. Commenters believe that easy access to parking is crucial for encouraging people to shop and visit local attractions. Several comments emphasise that reducing car parking will deter visitors, harming local businesses and the overall economy. Some suggest introducing a more flexible parking permit system for employees and residents.

- 4.14 While some support the aim of reducing emissions and promoting sustainable transport, others feel that the current infrastructure does not support a significant shift away from car usage. The potential increase in congestion from drivers searching for parking is also noted as counterproductive to environmental goals.
- 4.15 The one-way system in Lancaster is frequently criticized for contributing to congestion. Many believe it exacerbates traffic problems rather than alleviating them. Improvements to traffic flow and the management of roadworks are suggested as priorities. The existing one-way system is a major point of contention. Commenters suggest that it complicates traffic flow and should be re-evaluated. There is also criticism of the current traffic light setup and the impact of roadworks.
- 4.16 There is support for enhancing cycling infrastructure and making public transport more reliable and accessible. However, the practicality of these measures is questioned, particularly for elderly, disabled, or those carrying heavy shopping.
- 4.17 Commenters note that public transport does not adequately serve the outlying areas and rural communities that rely on Lancaster for services. They suggest improvements in bus frequency and coverage. There is acknowledgement of the need for environmental sustainability but stress that practical alternatives to car usage are currently insufficient. They argue that the wider transport policy should be more balanced and consider the needs of all residents.
- 4.18 Effective implementation of the car parking strategy requires cooperation between the city and county councils. There is frustration that decisions and funding are often centrally controlled, limiting local action. However, a forward-looking approach is advocated, with some commenters suggesting that the policy should account for future changes, such as the increase in electric vehicle usage and the development of charging infrastructure.
- 4.19 There is a call for clearer communication and more straightforward documentation to ensure public engagement and understanding of the policy. Some feel that the strategy document and consultation is overly complex and difficult to engage with. The needs of specific groups, such as the elderly, disabled, and those with young children, are highlighted. Commenters generally seek that any reduction in parking should not disproportionately affect these groups.

Summary of comments

<p>The comments reflect a level of deep concern with practical implications of policy concerned with reducing car parking, the adequacy of public transport, and the overall impact on local businesses and traffic flow. While there is some support for environmental initiatives, many feel that the current infrastructure and current policy framework do not adequately address the practical realities faced by residents and visitors. Collaboration between the local authorities and clear, accessible communication are seen as essential for successful implementation of any new car parking strategy.</p>

Demand Responses Summary

- 4.20 Many respondents emphasized the necessity of maintaining existing car parks, particularly those near key locations like the Grand Theatre, to ensure accessibility

for people with limited mobility or disabilities. The proximity of parking facilities is crucial for the viability of cultural venues.

- 4.21 There is a strong sentiment that reducing car parking availability or increasing charges would negatively impact local businesses. High parking costs are seen as detrimental to the local economy, potentially discouraging visitors, and shoppers, thereby harming businesses. Some comments suggest that the cost of parking is already high and reducing available spaces without first improving public transport could further hurt the local economy.
- 4.22 Many comments highlighted the inadequacy of current public transport options, particularly in the evenings and in rural areas surrounding Lancaster. There is a consensus that public transport needs substantial improvements before any reduction in car parking can be considered feasible.
- 4.23 The reliability and convenience of public transport, especially for those with mobility issues or those traveling with heavy equipment, were questioned. Improvements in this area are deemed necessary to reduce dependency on car travel.
- 4.24 Some respondents agreed with the assessment of current parking demand but felt the medium and long-term projections were insufficient and should be revisited. There is a call for maintaining or even increasing car parking capacity to support future developments and attractions, like new shops or the Eden Project, which are expected to increase demand for parking.
- 4.25 The safety of alternative car parks, especially for women traveling alone at night, was a significant concern. Respondents stressed the importance of secure, well-lit parking options to ensure safety. Comments indicated that any strategy should consider the diverse needs of the population, including parents, the elderly, and disabled individuals who may not find alternative transportation options viable.
- 4.26 Car sharing and other alternative transport policies are seen as impractical for many due to busy lifestyles, weather conditions, and the geography of Lancaster..

There is a suggestion that lower parking charges could lead to increased council income by attracting more visitors. The comparison with cities like Oxford and York was deemed unrealistic given Lancaster's different economic draw and scale.

- 4.27 There is general dissatisfaction with any proposed reductions in parking capacity, and many believe these changes could lead to increased traffic congestion and pollution as drivers search for fewer available spaces. Respondents stressed the need for a well-thought-out strategy that incorporates feedback from all user groups, considering both quantitative and qualitative data on parking needs.

Summary of comments
<p>The general tenor of comments on the demand analysis is one of concern and scepticism. The comments reflect a strong preference for maintaining or even increasing the current level of car parking provision, primarily due to concerns over future demand, accessibility, economic impact, and the inadequacy of public transport. The safety and convenience of alternative parking and transport options were also major themes. Respondents urged the council to consider the diverse needs of Lancaster's residents and visitors and to improve public transport infrastructure before implementing any significant reductions in car parking capacity.</p>

There is also a call for a more nuanced and user-focused approach to the parking strategy, recognising the varied requirements and challenges faced by different demographic groups and to better understand the connected value of car parks to businesses. Underlying data should be refined and clarified as best as practical given the issues with monitoring existing car park use.

Supply Responses Summary

- 4.28 The public comments on the view of supply of car parking reveal diverse perspectives, with a predominant focus on concerns regarding the proposed changes, potential impacts on accessibility, economic considerations, and the balance between maintaining current parking provisions and developing future sustainable solutions.
- 4.29 Many respondents expressed scepticism about any the proposed reductions in car parking spaces, fearing it will negatively impact the city's accessibility and economic vitality. There is a prevalent concern that reducing parking will deter visitors, particularly affecting local businesses, the arts, and cultural venues such as the Grand Theatre and The Dukes. Specific worries include the potential inconvenience for those with limited mobility or disabilities if nearby parking spaces are eliminated
- 4.30 Several comments highlight the perceived economic drawbacks of reducing parking. Respondents fear that fewer parking spaces will lead to higher parking fees, discourage shopping and tourism, and further exacerbate the decline of the high street.
- 4.31 There is also a critical view of the pricing strategy, with suggestions to implement a more flexible payment system, such as paying on exit, to better match the actual use of parking spaces .
- 4.32 While there is some support for sustainable and long-term solutions, many comments indicate that current plans lack adequate details on how alternative parking options will be implemented or improved. There is a call for the council to provide clear, feasible alternatives before reducing existing parking spaces . The idea of using vacant spaces, especially those privately owned like at Sainsbury's or Lidl, for public parking during off-peak hours was suggested as a temporary solution.
- 4.33 Accessibility remains a significant concern, with repeated mentions of how central and conveniently located the current parking is and how it is crucial for the city's functionality. The suggestion to keep parking within walking distance of main attractions and services, rather than pushing for park-and-ride schemes, is frequently noted. Comments also stress the need for parking options that accommodate large events and daily activities without creating additional traffic congestion.
- 4.34 Some respondents questioned the criteria used to compare Lancaster's parking fees with other cities, arguing that the selected cities (Oxford, Cambridge, York) are not comparable due to their larger tourist volumes and well-established park-and-ride facilities. They suggest comparing with smaller cities like Ely or Kendal for a more accurate analysis.
- 4.35 There is a call for transparency regarding how parking revenues are used, with suggestions that funds should be reinvested into maintaining and improving parking

facilities rather than subsidising other budget areas. Questions were raised about the council's financial responsibility and the sustainability of parking income, particularly whether it is sufficient to cover maintenance costs without burdening taxpayers.

- 4.36 Comments indicate a need for integrated planning that considers housing development, job availability, and transportation infrastructure in conjunction with the car parking strategy. The idea of converting some parking spaces in the Canal Quarter into affordable housing was met with concerns about the overall impact on the city's infrastructure and economic growth. The sentiment that any development should not come at the expense of reducing essential services like parking was strongly emphasised .

Summary of comments

The public comments reflect concern about the practical implications of the proposed car parking strategy. The predominant attitude is cautious, with an emphasis on ensuring that any changes do not undermine Lancaster's accessibility, economic health, or quality of life for its residents and visitors. There is a clear demand for more detailed plans, transparent use of funds, and a balanced approach that includes both sustainable solutions and the preservation of adequate parking facilities.

Strategy Positioning Reponses Summary

- 4.37 Many respondents believe the strategy does not adequately address the unique needs of Lancaster and feels more suitable for a larger city. There is a call for a more integrated and planned solution rather than reactive measures.
- 4.38 The language used in the strategy is criticised for being overly complex and filled with jargon, making it difficult for the average resident to understand.
- A significant concern is the potential negative impact on local businesses. Many fear that reducing car park availability will drive shoppers and visitors to other cities like Kendal, Preston, or Manchester, harming Lancaster's economy. Specific concerns are raised about the closure of St. Leonardsgate car parks, which are essential for accessing local businesses and cultural venues like the Lancaster Grand Theatre.
- 4.39 There is strong opposition to any wholesale shift towards app-based payments for parking, as it disenfranchises elderly and less tech-savvy individuals. However, a preference for contactless card payments is also expressed.
- 4.40 The strategy's focus on reducing car usage is seen as neglectful of those who rely on cars due to mobility issues or the lack of adequate public transport options. Respondents argue that any reduction in car parking must be accompanied by significant improvements in public transport. There is a call for better rail services and consideration of new transport solutions like trams. The current public transport infrastructure is deemed insufficient to support a major shift away from car usage.
- 4.41 While some support the environmental goals of the strategy, there is scepticism about the approach. Critics argue that raising parking charges to discourage car use might hurt the local economy without necessarily delivering the intended environmental benefits. There is a suggestion to designate central car parks for electric vehicle (EV) charging to promote greener alternatives.

- 4.42 Many feel that the strategy prioritizes council policies over the needs and preferences of the residents. There is a sentiment that the public's opinions are not being adequately considered. Some respondents express frustration with the consultation process itself, feeling that their feedback is ignored or undervalued.
- 4.43 Several comments include practical suggestions, such as implementing more multi-story car parks to maximize space, maintaining, and upgrading existing car parks, and ensuring cheaper and more accessible parking options. The idea of allowing overnight parking for motorhomes to attract tourists is also mentioned.
- 4.44 There is a call for the council to be more cautious with its assumptions about future needs and habits, advocating for a balanced approach that includes short-term and medium-term solutions. Respondents stress the need for the council to improve infrastructure and services before making significant changes to parking provisions.

Summary of comments

The overall response to this section is predominantly negative, with strong sentiments about preserving car parking facilities and enhancing rather than restricting access to the city. The public's primary concerns revolve around the economic impact, accessibility, and practicality of the proposed changes. There is a clear call for a more transparent, inclusive, and well-communicated strategy that genuinely reflects the needs and preferences of Lancaster's residents and businesses. The feedback emphasizes the importance of balancing environmental objectives with economic viability and social inclusivity. The general tenor of the comments indicates respondents feel the strategy is too "policy" led and driven by ideological concerns and too heavily weighted against "predict/provide" pole of policy.

Key Aims Responses Summary

- 4.45 Many commenters express concern that reducing parking in central locations will increase traffic congestion rather than alleviate it. For example, the proposed closure of St Leonardsgate car parks is particularly contentious, with fears that it will lead to more cars circulating in the one-way system.
- 4.46 There is a strong sentiment that out-of-town parking hubs need to be developed before any city centre parking is reduced to prevent driving visitors away. The need for sufficient parking to support the evening and cultural economy, particularly for venues like the Grand Theatre, is highlighted. Commenters argue that without nearby parking, venues may see a decline in attendance, especially from those with limited mobility. The strategy should ensure easy access to evening and cultural activities to avoid negative impacts on these sectors. Ensuring sufficient parking for blue badge holders is seen as crucial, with a focus on maintaining accessibility close to key destinations.
- 4.47 There are concerns that the needs of disabled and less mobile residents and visitors are not adequately addressed in the current plans. While there is support for high-quality and safe car parks, there is concern about the feasibility and funding of such

improvements. Some commenters suggest that current proposals focus too much on long-term goals without clear short-term improvements.

- 4.48 Several responses indicate scepticism about whether regeneration plans genuinely align with broader public policy objectives, suggesting that the plans seem more focused on council needs than those of residents and businesses. The impact on local businesses, particularly small businesses, and shops, is a recurring concern, with fears that reducing parking will hurt their viability.
- 4.49 There is a call for a clearer connection between the parking strategy and the overall transport strategy. Some feel that current public transport options are inadequate, particularly for evening travel, which makes reliance on cars necessary. Specific suggestions include improving public transport before making significant changes to car parking availability.
- 4.50 The promotion of alternative options such as Park and Ride is supported in principle but criticised for not being practical or adequately developed yet. Commenters urge that these alternatives need to be in place and functional before any reduction in city centre parking is implemented.
- 4.51 Support exists for future-proofing car parks with facilities for electric vehicles, cycle parking, and car share hubs. However, some responses highlight the need for these initiatives to be realistic and backed by sufficient investment. There is a strong call for more immediate actions to improve current infrastructure rather than focusing too much on long-term solutions.
- 4.52 Commenters frequently express doubts about the feasibility and practicality of the proposed timelines for short, medium, and long-term actions. There is concern that the plans are overly ambitious given current budget constraints and that they might not deliver timely results.

Summary of comments

Some respondents support the aims in principle but with significant reservations about implementation, timing, and the potential negative impact on local businesses and cultural venues. Many are sceptical of the council's ability to deliver on these aims and criticise the lack of detailed plans and financial transparency. Concerns about the strategy harming local businesses and increasing congestion are common. There is a strong desire for practical, immediate solutions that improve the current situation without causing undue disruption. Suggestions include developing out-of-town parking hubs first and ensuring public transport is a viable alternative before reducing city centre parking. Overall, the public comments reflect a cautious and critical stance toward the draft Aims, emphasising the need for a balanced approach that considers the immediate needs of residents, businesses, and cultural institutions alongside long-term goals.

Action Plan Responses Summary

- 4.53 A significant number of responses strongly object to the proposed closure of car parks, especially those near key locations like St Leonardsgate and The Grand Theatre. Concerns focus on the negative impact on local businesses, accessibility for people with mobility issues, and the viability of cultural venues. Many respondents fear that reducing car parking spaces will harm local businesses by deterring visitors,

particularly those who drive. There is a concern that the reduced parking will decrease footfall, negatively impacting the high street economy and potentially leading to business closures.

- 4.54 Numerous comments highlight the inadequacies of the current public transport system, noting that it is not a viable alternative to car travel due to issues like limited routes, infrequent services, and high costs. Many respondents call for substantial improvements in public transport infrastructure before any reduction in car parking is implemented. There is a strong call for maintaining affordable and accessible parking options. Respondents argue that high parking fees and limited spaces will discourage people from visiting the city centre, exacerbating economic challenges for local businesses.
- 4.55 Some responses suggest promoting car sharing, improving Park & Ride facilities, and developing other forms of transportation like trams or more frequent bus services. However, there is scepticism about the practicality and effectiveness of these alternatives given the current infrastructure.
- 4.56 Several comments criticize the consultation process itself, describing it as confusing, poorly communicated, and not reflective of public opinion. There is a perception that the council is not genuinely considering the views of residents and businesses.
- 4.57 Some respondents support the plan's environmental goals but stress the need for a balanced approach that does not undermine the city's economic health. There are also calls for more evidence to support the environmental benefits of the proposed actions.
- 4.58 Some comments address the potential use of modern payment technologies for parking, emphasizing the need for user-friendly systems that do not exclude those without smartphones or those who face difficulties with digital payments. Respondents highlight the need for a phased approach where immediate parking needs are met while gradually implementing long-term transport solutions. There is a call for more immediate action on public transport improvements rather than waiting for long-term policies to take effect.

Summary of comments
<p>The predominant sentiment is one of caution and scepticism, with a demand for a more pragmatic and balanced solution that considers both environmental and economic impacts. There are several negative responses, with many expressing strong objections to any proposed reduction in car parking spaces. Concerns are primarily focused on the potential negative impacts on local businesses, accessibility issues, and the inadequacy of alternative transportation solutions. There is a call for pragmatic solutions that balance environmental goals with economic realities. Many respondents urge the council to reconsider the plan's feasibility and to ensure that any changes are supported by robust infrastructure and realistic alternatives.</p> <p>While there is some support for reducing car dependence, it is contingent on significant improvements in public transport. Respondents emphasise that without a reliable and affordable public transport system, reducing car parking spaces will likely lead to greater inconvenience and economic downturn. There is a level of distrust expressed towards the</p>

council's consultation process, with many feeling that their concerns and suggestions are not being adequately addressed or considered.

5.

General / Miscellaneous and Email comments

5.1 The general email and miscellaneous comments raised represent a broad consolidation of the themes and attitudes raised in the body of responses to the key elements of the Draft Strategy. Comments reflect a wide range of concerns and suggestions from residents, business owners, and other stakeholders. The feedback highlights issues related to accessibility, economic impact, technological inclusivity, and environmental sustainability. Below is a summary of the main themes and attitudes expressed in the comments. Key themes include

- **Accessibility and Mobility:** Many comments stress the importance of maintaining accessible parking at the right locations, particularly for elderly and disabled individuals. The potential removal of central car parks, especially near cultural venues like the Grand Theatre, raised significant concerns about accessibility for those with mobility issues. There are specific requests for maintaining or improving blue badge parking and considering the needs of people who rely on cars but do not qualify for a blue badge.
- **Economic Impact:** A recurring theme is the potential negative impact on local businesses if car parks are reduced. Commenters argue that convenient parking is crucial for sustaining the economic vitality of the city centre especially for retail and hospitality sectors. Some business owners expressed concerns that increased parking costs and reduced availability would deter customers and potentially lead to a decline in business.
- **Technological Inclusivity:** There is apprehension about the push towards modern technology for car parking payments. Several comments highlight that not everyone, especially older residents, is comfortable using smartphone apps or other digital payment methods.
- **Public Transport and Alternative Modes of Transport:** While there is support for improving public transport and cycling infrastructure, many feel that current public transport options are inadequate, especially for evening use and for those living in rural areas. Suggestions include enhancing park-and-ride facilities, providing secure and high-quality cycle parking, and ensuring reliable and frequent bus services.
- **Environmental and Long-term Planning:** Some comments support the strategy's environmental goals, such as reducing congestion and promoting sustainable transport. However, there is also concern about the practicality and timeline of these goals. Suggestions for environmental improvements include adding solar panel roofing to car parks and ensuring that any new developments are balanced with the need for accessible parking.
- **Practical Suggestions and Criticisms:** Numerous practical suggestions were offered, such as developing multi-story car parks at strategic locations, improving traffic flow with better roadworks planning, and ensuring that any reduction in parking capacity is matched with adequate alternatives. There are criticisms about the consultation process itself, with several commenters finding the online form difficult to navigate and expressing frustration with technical issues, leading to frustration, and potentially limiting feedback.
- **Safety and Security:** Safety concerns were highlighted, particularly regarding the need for well-lit and secure parking facilities for evening use. The fear of vandalism and theft of bicycles was also mentioned, indicating a need for robust security measures.

5.2 Specific issues and suggestions raised include:

- *Motorhome Provision:* There is a call for better provision for motorhomes, with suggestions to allow overnight parking to boost the local economy, especially the night-time economy.
- *Short Stay Parking:* Some commenters requested short stay free parking in the evenings to facilitate quick trips to pick up takeaways or run brief errands.
- *Event Parking:* The importance of maintaining parking near cultural venues like the Grand Theatre was emphasized, with concerns that reducing these facilities would hurt attendance and volunteer participation.
- *Data Accuracy:* There were complaints about the accuracy of the data used to justify any changes to parking provision, with calls for more up-to-date and comprehensive analysis.

Summary of comments
<p>The general comments on Lancaster's draft car parking strategy reveal an array of concerns and suggestions. While there is some support for the strategy's environmental and sustainability goals, there is significant apprehension about its potential impact on accessibility, local businesses, and the practicality of public transport alternatives. The feedback underscores the need for a balanced approach that carefully considers the diverse needs of the community while working towards a more sustainable and accessible city transport system.</p>

6. Stakeholder Reports, Submissions, and Workshop Outcomes

- 6.1 The stakeholder event invited a limited number of representatives from community organisations and local businesses to events.

Lancaster Footlights & Grand Theatres CIO

The workshop engagement and submissions from Lancaster Footlights cover a number of topics and can be summarised as follows:

- **Potentially Inaccurate Data and Misleading Conclusions:** The theatre challenges the statement that there is "good availability and surplus capacity" in car parks, based on their experience of frequent parking difficulties during performances, especially on weekends and in December. The data used to support the strategy is considered low quality and outdated, failing to include sales from the RingGo app (*author's note: it should be noted that data does include Ring Go app sales although Ring Go permit purchases use is not included as these could be used in any car park at any time*), and other important factors like broken ticket machines and car sitting, potentially leading to significant underreporting of parking demand.
- **Impact on Theatre Operations and Accessibility:** The theatre reports frequent complaints and refund requests due to parking difficulties, particularly affecting those with accessibility needs who may not qualify for a disabled badge. The proposed closure of nearby car parks is seen as a direct threat to the theatre's viability, with a large percentage of guests stating they would be unlikely to visit if they could not park close by.
- **Need for Integrated and Smart Transportation Solutions:** The response highlights the lack of smart monitoring, signage, and an integrated transport plan, which exacerbates the parking issues. The theatre supports the development of modern payment methods, intelligent transportation systems, and wayfinding improvements, which are missing from the current strategy.
- **Disproportionate Impact on Vulnerable Groups:** The removal of car parking spaces is seen as discriminatory against those with accessibility needs and residents from rural areas. The strategy lacks equality and economic impact assessments, crucial for understanding the broader implications of the proposed changes.
- **Support for a Balanced and Realistic Approach:** While supporting the vision of addressing the climate emergency and providing affordable housing, the theatre argues that the strategy is too abstract and idealistic given the available resources and timescales. A more balanced, measured, and phased approach is recommended, ensuring that short and medium-term measures are successful before making drastic changes.
- **Concerns Over Immediate Implementation:** The theatre contends that the immediate reduction of over 300 parking spaces by 2026 is premature and not justified by the available evidence. There is a call for a more prudent approach, allowing improvements to take effect and measuring their impact before making further reductions in parking spaces.
- **Call for Specific Actions and Revisions:** The theatre requests the inclusion of ongoing equality and economic impact assessments, and an option to reverse the closure of car parks if the action plan fails. There is a need for tangible compensatory provisions for the imminent closure of key car parks serving the theatre.

LF> also undertook a survey from their database of individual theatre users/supporters which 740 responses with the following themes and issues raised.

- **Essential Nature of Car Parks:** Many respondents emphasised that car parks, specifically St Leonardsgate, are essential for frequent visits to the theatre. The availability of nearby parking is seen as crucial for the accessibility and convenience of attending performances. A significant number of comments highlight that the removal or reduction of car parks would negatively impact their ability to attend theatre events. Concerns include potential lateness, missing shows, and overall decreased attendance.
- **Economic Concerns:** Respondents frequently mentioned that reducing car parking would hurt local businesses and footfall in the area. There is a fear that people will choose alternative locations if parking becomes too difficult.
- **Security and Safety:** Several responses noted that alternative parking options feel less secure and are perceived as being too far from the theatre. The proximity and perceived safety of the current car parks are important factors for attendees.
- **Public Transport Limitations:** Comments also pointed out the inadequacy of public transport, especially after 10pm making car parking essential for evening performances. The lack of reliable public transport options is seen as a major barrier to reducing car dependency.
- **Broad Criticism of Parking Strategy:** There is criticism of the proposed parking strategy, with many expressing frustrations over the potential negative impacts on the theatre and the city in general.

Total responses: 1,251 with an age distribution predominantly 30-49 years old (45%), followed by 50-69 years old (35.2%). Majority completed the survey after their visit (73.3%). Key results include:

1. Mode of Transportation:
 - Car: 94.2% to the theatre and 94.5% home.
 - Walk: 4% to the theatre and 3.4% home.
 - Public transport (bus, park & ride, etc.): Less than 1.5%.
2. Favoured Parking Locations:
 - Lower and Upper St Leonardsgate: Over 94%.
 - Other locations: Less than 6%.
3. Impact of Car Park Availability:
 - Average impact rating if car parks next to the theatre were not available: 6.3 (on a scale from 1 to 7).
 - Likelihood to still visit if car parks were not available: Average rating 2.9 (on a scale from 1 to 7).
4. Public Transport Feasibility:
 - Unable to use public transport: 66.2% to the theatre, 80.5% home.
 - Could use public transport: 20.5% to the theatre, 7% home.
5. Accessibility Needs:
 - Respondents with accessibility needs: 39.9%.
6. Time of Performances:
 - Evening shows: 89.4%.
 - Afternoon shows: 10.2%.

It is contended that LF> would require a total of 158 car parking spaces based on a typical performance attendance (460 guests, 25 performers, 10 crew, 10 volunteers, 5 staff) and the average vehicle occupancy (3 persons per vehicle).

- *Proximity*: Parking should be close to the theatre, essential due to accessibility needs and weather concerns.
- *Accessibility*: Parking and pedestrian routes must have suitable surfaces, compliant gradients, appropriate widths for entrances and exits, safe road crossings, and assistive signage.
- *Safety*: Adequate signage and lighting in parking areas and along routes to the theatre. Routes should avoid areas of anti-social behaviour and ensure user safety, especially for vulnerable groups.
- *Space Size*: Adequate space for larger, adapted vehicles for users with additional needs.
- *Type of Spaces*: Consideration for coach parking.
- *Opening Hours*: Parking should be available until at least 23:15 to match theatre

Summary of LF> comments

Lancaster Grand Theatre's response is one of constructive criticism. The theatre acknowledges the importance of wider council regeneration and environmental goals and the need for affordable housing but stresses that these should not come at the expense of the local economy and accessibility. The response calls for a realistic, evidence-based approach that takes into account the actual needs and experiences of the community. The theatre emphasises the need for integrated solutions, modern infrastructure, and a phased implementation to ensure the strategy's success without undermining local businesses and cultural institutions.

The overall attitude of the user survey responses is predominantly negative towards the car parking strategy. Respondents are concerned about the practical implications of reduced parking availability, including the potential decline in theatre attendance, economic repercussions for local businesses, and issues related to safety and convenience. The responses reflect a strong preference for maintaining or improving the current parking provisions to support both the theatre and the wider community.

The engagement has provided valuable and nuanced insight into the current reliance on car parking by theatre attendees, highlighting significant concerns about the availability of parking and the feasibility of public transport alternatives.

Lancaster and Morecambe Chamber of Commerce

The workshop engagement reviewed the document systematically, covering a several areas of concern and policy summarised as follows

Restrictions: Concerns arise about increased parking restrictions and reduced availability impacting daily business life, particularly for those relying on cars. Potential increased parking fees and fines are seen as disproportionately affecting business interests.

Environmental Considerations while understanding need for reduced emissions and improved air quality this must be generate through improving public transportation, creating more park-and-ride facilities, and increasing electric vehicle charging stations.

Accessibility Issues Worries about the strategy's impact on business employee / recruitment and the need for adequate business fleet parking. Fear that reduced parking will deter customers, harming economic activity. Real-time availability apps and automated payment systems would assist efficiency in space use.

Public Transportation Integration The group supports improvements in public transportation but calls for better integration between the parking strategy and public transport planning. Suggestions include for more engagement.

Specific Strategy Points:

- **Policy:** Inadequate public transport forces reliance on car, reducing parking availability could harm local businesses, and practical alternatives to car usage are currently insufficient. The one-way system is seen as contributing to congestion. Effective strategy implementation requires cooperation between business and both city and county councils.
- **Demand:** Stressed Importance of maintaining existing car parks for business use although increasing charges could hurt local businesses.
- **Supply:** Fear that reducing parking will negatively impact accessibility and economic vitality. Higher parking fees and reduced parking could deter shopping and tourism and need to ensure clear, feasible alternatives before reducing existing parking.
- **Strategy Positioning:** while drawing on best practice the strategy should address Lancaster's unique needs and situation.
- **Key Aims:** that reducing central city parking will increase congestion rather than mitigate and that sufficient parking needed to support evening and cultural activities. Supports high-quality car parks but concerns about feasibility and funding.
- **Action Plan:** Maintaining affordable and accessible parking is crucial.

Lancaster Business Improvement District

The workshop engagement with Lancaster BID covered a number of topics and can be summarised as follows:

Economic Importance of Parking: There's a strong concern that reducing car parking capacity in the city centre will have a long-term detrimental effect on business viability, potentially leading to closures and further economic decline.

Concerns around data collection and interpretation: Lancaster BID criticised the data used to show capacity, use and perceived space availability across the individual car parks. The documented difficulties in assessing use of car parks and caveats were recognised, but it was suggested a mechanism to assess the impact of permit parking should be introduced as well as discounting disabled spaces from the strategic analysis as these cannot be considered to be "available for general use."

Lancaster BID note peak parking demand and space availability on average days is more difficult than the basic overall day/week demand analysis suggests. This leads to increased circulation around the gyratory for drivers searching for a space, lateness for appointments and complaints. In addition, evening use in particular for cultural venues is important and needs factoring into considerations of strategic numbers of spaces available and location

Employees and Recruitment The importance of parking for staff /employees, particularly for evening economy was stressed. While not within scope of the draft strategy the group was keen to stress the feeling that price of parking was an issue for employer/employees as well as customers.

Business Users Businesses who operate vehicles stressed that certainty of space availability and problems with fleet finding spaces during the working day.

Comprehensive Planning: Advocacy for a balanced, data-driven approach that integrates parking strategy with broader economic and transport plans.

Call for Improved Public Transport and Infrastructure: The business group supports the development of alternative transportation but stresses that public transport improvements must precede or coincide with any reduction in car parking.

Totally Local Lancaster CIC

Inadequate Consideration of Current Economic Conditions: The business group argues that the strategy does not sufficiently account for the ongoing economic hardships, such as the lingering effects of COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis, which have left businesses financially vulnerable. The need for immediate and pragmatic support for businesses, rather than long-term, uncertain plans, is emphasised.

Outdated and Insufficient Data: The response criticizes the use of outdated data in the draft strategy, with traffic volume data from 2014 and survey comparisons from as far back as 2017 and 2019. It is argued that this data does not reflect the current realities post-pandemic and post-Bay Gateway opening, thus undermining the strategy's credibility and relevance. Analysis is included which contends that certain businesses have a heavy reliance on car borne customers.

Concerns About the Canal Quarter and Eden North Projects: There is a call for the car parking strategy to be integrated into the Canal Quarter redevelopment and Eden North project, rather than treated in isolation. The expected influx of visitors from Eden North (720,000 extra annually) necessitates robust car parking solutions to prevent additional strain on existing infrastructure.

Call for Improved Public Transport and Infrastructure: The business group supports the development of alternative transportation but stresses that public transport improvements must precede or coincide with any reduction in car parking. The current public transport system is deemed inadequate to support the transition away from car dependence.

Proposed Solutions and Recommendations: The response suggests the construction of two multi-storey car parks at the northern and southern entry points to the city, which would help protect businesses and manage footfall more effectively. This approach is seen as a way to eventually release some surface car parks for housing development, while reducing traffic congestion and CO2 emissions through a well-distributed parking strategy.

Summary of Business Group Workshop/Submissions

The views are predominantly critical but constructive. The business groups acknowledges the importance of addressing climate change and supports initiatives that would reduce CO2 emissions. However, there is a strong insistence that the economic

realities and immediate needs of the business community must be prioritized to avoid exacerbating current financial strains. The group calls for a balanced and phased approach that integrates comprehensive, up-to-date data and robust planning to ensure that the business environment in Lancaster remains viable and vibrant. In conclusion, while the business groups is open to collaborative planning and recognises the potential benefits of long-term strategies, it believes that the current draft car parking strategy needs significant revisions to align with the immediate economic needs and realities of Lancaster's business community.

Change.Org Petition

While an official submission has not been made the council is aware of an on-line petition conducted through the website Change.Org entitled "Save Lancaster City Centre Car Parks" which has been set up and promoted by city centre businesses. The petition introduction strongly opposes any proposal to close car parks without a clear transport strategy, highlighting several concerns:

1. **Economic Impact:** Closure of car parks is expected to drastically reduce footfall, leading to the closure of many businesses and significant job losses, negatively affecting the local economy.
2. **Accessibility:** The current Park and Ride system is inadequate and poorly managed, which would make access to the city centre difficult.
3. **Council Accountability:** The city council and officers are criticised for showing "selfishness," "lack of integrity," and "poor leadership" and accused of a lack of transparency / engagement with the business community.
4. **Alternative Solutions:** Contends that the council owns properties that could be used for social housing without sacrificing parking.
5. **Call to Action:** The petition urges the public to sign and demand a halt to car park closures until a comprehensive transportation plan is developed.

The petition stresses the need for public support to protect local businesses and maintain the vitality of Lancaster's city centre. At the time of writing the petition has 202 signatories.

Need for parking strategy alignment with the Canal Quarter and Eden North projects. **Public Transport:** Support for improvements but stressed they must precede parking reductions.

7. Discussion and Potential Strategy Implications

- 7.1 The consultation received a good response from the community and stakeholders and demonstrates that people have been informed about the issues and considerations for ongoing review of car parking in Lancaster. In addition to the large number of people accessing the dedicated Keep Connected webpage, there has been widespread coverage in local, regional, and national news publications, both print and online.
- 7.2 To ensure that the engagement and consultation reached a wide audience they were conducted in a variety of ways. While most of the responses received were online, there were several stakeholder in-person events/workshops.
- 7.3 The open survey questionnaire responses provide a good qualitative and quantitative information base to consider the next steps. The consolidated public consultation responses on Lancaster's draft car parking strategy present a predominantly critical and concerned community perspective. The main themes and conclusions drawn from the various sections of the feedback, and some potential actions and implications for future draft strategy iterations are as follows

- **Opposition and criticism** Some respondents appreciate efforts to address parking issues, reduce congestion, and promote alternative transportation. Most however argue the strategy neglects the needs of car owners, particularly in suburban and rural areas where public transportation is insufficient. However, it is accepted in the draft strategy that public transport will take time to improve and there is a need to maintain an optimal number of publicly available car parking spaces.
- **Comprehensiveness of Data** Language used when describing the caveats and issues with the parking demand use data has caused some confusion. The data used in the strategy does include general RingGo app payment use but does not include "session/permit" parking (which allow use in Morecambe / Lancaster and at all times over a certain period of time depending on the period purchased. It is not considered permit parking has a significant impact on strategic capacity / use, but there needs to be an estimate of impact on space to address concerns.

From the number of responses many respondents note peak parking demand and space availability on average days is more difficult than the basic overall day/week demand analysis suggests. This leads to increased circulation around the gyratory for drivers searching for a space. In addition, evening use in particular for cultural venues is important and needs factoring into considerations of strategic numbers of spaces available and location.

Review and improve data, new evidence on reported parking difficulties and this may lead to consideration of increasing the strategic number of car parking spaces regarded as "optimal" for the city centre from the figure identified in the draft strategy.

- **Accessibility:** Worries about the impact on disabled individuals, the elderly, and those reliant on cars for essential activities, particularly related to geographical locations of any proposed replacement car parks. Lancaster is a relatively small city and, while accepting there may be some users with mobility issues but ineligible for Blue Badge, the main public parking provision will by necessity be located on the periphery. Walking routes from

car parks to destinations should be safe and secure. Lancaster is a relatively small city and, while accepting there may be some users with mobility issues but ineligible for Blue Badge, the main public parking provision will by necessity be located on the periphery. Walking routes from car parks to destinations should be safe and secure.

- Should the council progress with either or both temporary parking options more certainty on location and feasibility of new parking provision and new green transport / MSCP hubs is a priority.
- **Connected Value** While price of parking is outside of the scope of the consultation it is clear that the business community places value on the city centre as a location but only as accessibility and availability of car parking spaces allows for employee and business use. There are potential opportunities to review parking pricing/category of use in relation to location to deliver more certainty to business users
- **Public Transport Adequacy:** While public transport issues are outside of the scope of the consultation current public transport options are agreed to be insufficient, especially for rural areas and evening travel into Lancaster.
- **Implementation Feasibility:** Scepticism about the practicality and effectiveness of proposed measures, including enforcement and technological inclusivity need to be overcome. Should the council progress with its Action Plan measures - either or both temporary parking options more certainty on location and feasibility of new parking provision and new green transport / MSCP hubs is a priority.
- **Consultation Process:** Some criticism of the consultation material is valid although general email comments on the whole document could have been submitted. There is a need to review and check future document and consultation material on the car parking strategy for greater clarity and ease of use. Policy needs to be supported by an Equality Impact Assessment.

8. Next Steps

- 8.1 This summary document encapsulates the main issues and attitudes expressed during the consultation, reflecting a demand for a cautious, inclusive, and well-communicated approach to developing Lancaster's city centre parking strategy.
- 8.2 The consultation highlighted the complexity of balancing parking needs with transport and other council goals. The feedback calls for:
 - A phased, pragmatic approach.
 - Improved data collection and analysis.
 - Enhanced communication and transparency in the consultation process.
 - Integration of parking strategy with broader city planning and transport initiatives.
- 8.3 The council needs to refine the strategy, and implementation plans and will prepare a revised draft strategy and action plan for consultation.

Appendix A: Summary of Consultation Responses

Refer to separate document (to be published separately)

- (i) Questionnaire Analysis
- (ii) Email response analysis

Appendix B: Detailed Stakeholder Responses

Refer to separate document (to be published separately)

- Grand Theatre
- Lancaster BID
- Lancaster and Morecambe Chamber of Commerce
- Totally Local Lancaster