

CABINET

Lancaster City Centre Car Parking Strategy

08 July 2025

Report of Chief Officer Sustainable Growth

PURPOSE OF REPORT				
To consider the next steps in agreeing and approving the Lancaster City Centre Parking Strategy and Action Plan to give explicit policy support and further certainty to the achievement of the city council's car parking and wider social, environmental and economic objectives.				
Key Decision	X	Non-Key Decision	Referral from Cabinet Member	
Date of notice of forthcoming key decision		May 2025		
This report is public				

RECOMMENDATIONS OF Councillor Nick Wilkinson

1. The Lancaster City Centre Car Parking Strategy and Action Plan 2025–2028 (including its strategic aims, delivery framework, and implementation timeline) is approved.
2. A strategy review is progressed through 2027 including performance data, user feedback, and updates to delivery priorities.
3. Individual project decisions will return to the relevant authority (Cabinet/Portfolio Holder) where further staged approvals or funding decisions are required subject to correct governance and due diligence being in place.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 At its October 2024 meeting Cabinet considered a report on the specific issue of strategic car parking numbers arising from an interim analysis of the consultation arising from the draft Lancaster City Centre Car Parking Strategy and Action Plan 2024 (The Draft Parking Strategy).

1.2 Members resolved the following (Minute reference:37)

- Future car parking policy options for Lancaster city centre are developed within a strategic context of providing between 1,400 and 1,500 council operated car parking spaces, with an ambition to achieve the higher figure.
- The Lancaster City Centre Car Parking Strategy and Action Plan adopts these criteria and framework in any future Strategy iterations to be considered by Cabinet.
- Maintaining an optimal and efficiently managed quantity of public car parking provision in and around Lancaster city centre is a key priority for the city council, and its long-term provision, location and typology should form an explicit part of the sustainable travel and transport policy agenda for the city.
- The increase in strategic numbers provides Cabinet with further comfort, in terms of the ongoing maintenance of city centre economic health, city centre accessibility and car user utility, for the progression of the planned release of Nelson street car park for affordable housing.

1.3 Since this meeting officers undertook further work and analysis on key elements in the draft strategy Action Plan to bring more certainty to the proposals to retain and enhance car parking and amenity within this strategic provision framework. A report was considered at Cabinet meeting in June 2025 (Minute reference 14) and significant resources agreed for proposals critical to the maintenance of the strategic provision in the short-to-medium term for the following:

- Development of tender documents and procurement for securing Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) across the city council's city centre parking portfolio.
- Ensuring a reasonable timescale for the reopening of the city council's Castle car park.
- Initial feasibility and costing of both temporary and permanent surface parking provision options.

A revised Lancaster City Centre Parking Strategy was also requested to be considered at a future Cabinet.

1.4 The revised final Lancaster City Centre Parking Strategy and Action Plan has been completed which further defines the context and justification for these specific proposals to improve the city council's car parking portfolio. Approval is now sought for the Strategy to ensure the wider policy direction is explicit and forms part of the council's strategic policy framework.

2.0 **Proposal Details**

2.1 A detailed report on the consultation outcomes against the draft Lancaster City Centre Parking Strategy is attached in **Appendix 1**. In summary, the consultation response called for:

- A clearer, phased, and pragmatic approach to provision of car parking if

current car parking sites, particularly in the Canal Quarter, are to be released for housing and/or commercial uses.

- Improved data collection and analysis.
- Enhanced communication and transparency in the consultation process.
- Integration of parking strategy with broader city planning and transport initiatives.
- More certainty on location and feasibility of new parking provision and new green transport / Multi Storey Car Parking (MSCP) hubs if these are to play a role in future strategic parking provision.

2.2 The evidence provided in the consultation initially led to officers recommend consideration of increasing the strategic number of car parking spaces regarded as optimal for the city centre to between 1,400 and 1,500, with an ambition to achieve the higher number in the long-term. This arose from:

- Evidence / comment from the consultation around parking difficulties and space availability.
- The need to take account of parking permit current and future use.
- The lack of city council control over the major transport public improvement policy levers.
- Difficulty in judging timing and impact of future parking space demand drivers - either those potentially reducing demand (in the sense of policy action to mitigate number of car journeys) and those potentially increasing demand (for example general economic/housing growth and strategic interventions such as Eden Morecambe).

2.3 The revised Lancaster City Centre Parking Strategy is attached in **Appendix 2**. It covers broadly the same areas as the draft strategy but with clearer format and focus to further give comfort that the economic health of the city centre can be maintained. It is a pragmatic strategy for city parking spaces provided by the city council to continue to meet general and peak demand periods for the immediate future.

2.4 It should provide further comfort to business and community stakeholders that the council impacts from any current and future proposed surface car park disposal policies. It also provides critical context, certainty, and impetus to improve and develop the council's asset management strategy. The policy proposes the following city council portfolio space availability for Lancaster.

- The council's current parking portfolio numbers 1,624 but with around 1,589 available for General Use when accounting for permit only spaces.
- Currently capacity has been reduced to 1,329 with the temporary closure of Castle Car Park.
- Portfolio changes as part of the Strategy Action Plan delivers 1584 General Use spaces.

Interventions	Space Numbers for General Use (By end of 2028 strategy period)			
By end of	2025	2026	2027	2028
Car park				
Kingsway	16	116	116	116
Edward Street extension	112	112	112	112
Castle car park reopening - Subject to landlord legals	0	287	287	287
Nelson Street	120	0	0	0
Edward Street 2	0	0	60	60
Moor Mills 4 - Evening, Weekends & Bank holidays only	100	100	100	100
Bulk St conversion to short stay	0	8	8	8
Upper & Lower St Leonardsgate.	203	203	0	0
Spaces following defined interventions	551	826	683	683
Base capacity as of May 2025 = 1329 General Use				
Overall Parking Numbers	1452	1727	1584	1584
Capacity Aim Lower ambition - 1,400 spaces	1400	1400	1,400	1,400
Difference	52	327	184	184
Capacity Aim Upper ambition - 1,500 spaces	1500	1500	1500	1,500
Difference	-48	227	84	84

- 2.5 The city council's resource allocations made in June - both capital and revenue projects – will ensure the council can meet the strategic space targets. Long term, further changes and decisions on release of sites and capital interventions will be considered against a review of the outcomes over the strategy period.

3.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

- 3.1 A summary of the options and analysis is presented below:

	Option 1: Do not approve the revised Lancaster City Centre Car Parking Strategy and Action Plan	Option 2: Approve the revised Lancaster City Centre Car Parking Strategy and Action Plan
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Advantages	<p>No advantages identified</p>	<p>Provides a clear policy framework for delivering an improved parking portfolio aligned with the council's broader goals on economic vitality, climate action, and housing.</p> <p>Provides a statement that can be considered within the context of regional decisions on local transport and movement policy / resources.</p> <p>Confirms support for previously agreed city council capital and revenue interventions.</p> <p>Provides an explicit response to the draft strategy consultation feedback and business/community concerns by confirming policy intent as well as active delivery.</p>
Disadvantages	<p>Fails to provide an explicit response to consultation and fails to provide a policy design . shape to feed into regional transport objectives and regeneration goals.</p> <p>Council does not further commit to evidence-based policy planning, which may erode trust in decisions.</p> <p>Creates uncertainty limiting strategic planning and reducing the council's ability to coordinate land use.</p> <p>Difficult to consider release of further Canal Quarter sites for affordable housing as the target strategic parking numbers could not be maintained without the proposed interventions and underpinning policy justification.</p>	<p>Commits the city council to ongoing review and monitoring of an approved Policy document.</p>
Risks/ Mitigation	<p>Failure to act may conflict with the council's own stated economic and climate priorities. Risk could be partially mitigated by future ad hoc interventions or alternative "road map"</p> <p>Impact on other council objectives and uncertainty.</p>	<p>Strategy Risks have been mitigated through the allocation of resources to deliver critical elements of the Strategy Action Plan.</p>

4.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

- 4.1 Following Members' consideration and confirmation that the proposals meet the council's objectives and its wider policy aspirations, **Option 2** is preferred. The strategy is a policy document which outlines controlled, phased, and pragmatic investment in Lancaster's future parking infrastructure as a significant element of local transport and regeneration infrastructure planning.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 Concerns from the business community, about the long-term provision of public parking, and general parking are understood. Through the revised Lancaster City Centre Car Parking Strategy and Action Plan, alongside ongoing work with county council, the issue will be addressed at a strategic city-wide level, with appreciation of the statutory strategic policy imperatives the city council is working within.
- 5.2 The council recognises that having an appropriate level of car parking in the city is important to support the economy and provide a range and choice of transport options and to ensure accessibility for the less mobile and populations underserved by public transport. An agreed strategic parking portfolio delivered as part of the revised Lancaster City Centre Parking Strategy provides critical context and framing for the council's ambitions to provide parking provision that is fit for purpose and fit for the future.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

A Sustainable District – car parking provision and car use is a consideration in meeting the challenges of the council's declared Climate Emergency and a range of other council objectives.

An Inclusive and Prosperous Local Economy – building a sustainable and just local economy that benefits people and organisations needs to consider car parking provision as a key feature of accessibility for certain groups and communities.

Healthy and Happy Communities – tackling car parking provision and some of the negative consequences inherent in the current portfolio will contribute to healthy and happy community objectives

A Co-Operative, Kind and Responsible Council – further consultation and ongoing discussion with stakeholders will achieve the best outcomes for in tandem with running efficient quality public services, of which car parking provision is a key service provision.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, HR, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

Asset health and safety and community safety should be improved with progression of the car parking strategy Action Plan in the short, medium, and long-term. There are clear equity, sustainability, and rural proofing considerations when discussing elements of car park provision and the council's own car parking assets given the intersection with public transport policy and issues with public transport availability and the sustainable travel and transport / Climate Emergency discussion.

A fuller equality impact assessment is provided in **Appendix 3** of this report

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Previous reports have considered the procurement and delivery aspects of the proposed parking improvements programme defined in the Action Plan.

The decision on the strategy's adoption/approval into corporate policy can be taken by Cabinet.

There are no further legal implications in adopting the document as corporate policy.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific financial implications that arise from the adoption of the Lancaster City Centre Car Parking Strategy.

The main future financial implications in approving the Strategy lie in managing the cost/income impacts on the General Fund arising from any decision to remove or add city council car park assets across the city centre area over the next 15 years – in effect the balance between capital and revenue implications of any increased or reduced provision.

The assumption in the report is that any potential negative impact on the General Fund of removing car parking assets will not be a short to medium term concern given that enough capacity is believed to exist in the council car parking portfolio to absorb current car park users for most periods of time across the year. This would mean broadly that net income would be maintained against the physical space numbers suggested to be delivered over the Strategy period. When combined with the impact of potential capital receipts and potential efficiency savings the General Fund position is likely to be cost neutral with some car parking space loss.

The assumption in the report is that for any new (permanent or temporary) car parking provision a commercial business case would be put forward demonstrating that borrowing costs for capital expenditure (inclusive of any external funding) and ongoing revenue running costs would be balanced by overall car parking portfolio gross income with the potential to also deliver a net surplus. Any net cost of interventions would be considered in the balance of costs and benefits assessed in achieving council objectives. Such future business cases would be a matter for consideration as part of the progression of proposals into the council's future capital programme.

Previous reports have considered several areas of project development and capital provision in this way and are proceeding through the appropriate budget processes and protocols following Cabinet consideration and approval, subject to correct governance and due diligence being in place.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Human resources: No HR implications arising from this report.

Information Services: No Information Service implications arising from this report.

Property: No Property implications arising from this report.

Open Space Implications: No open space implications arising from this report.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 3rd June 2025, 6.00 p.m. - Lancaster City Council](#)
(refer to agenda Item 14: Lancaster City centre Car Parking Portfolio Improvements – Design Development, Planning and Implementation.

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