Public Document Pack

Democratic Services Section
Chief Executive's Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

6th March, 2017

MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

In addition to those matters previously notified to you, the following item(s) will also be considered at the meeting to be held at 5.15 pm on Wednesday, 8th March, 2017.

Yours faithfully,

SUZANNE WYLIE

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

6 (a) City Centre Living (Pages 1 - 18)

7 (a) Quarter 3 Finance Report (Pages 19 - 28)

8 (d) Belfast Car Parking Strategy (Pages 29 - 80)

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Belfast City Council

CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Subject:	City Centre Living
Date:	8th March 2017
Reporting Officer:	Nuala Gallagher
Contact Officer:	Alice McGlone

Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	x
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	x	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Committee on work underway to identify the key issues around liveability and increasing the residential population in the city centre.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: Note the contents of the report.
3.0	**Main report**
	Background
3.1	The City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) recognises that a residential population is an important element for a successful and vibrant city centre. Belfast's city centre residential market is currently under-developed. CCRIS identifies the need for 400 additional units each year (6,000 by 2030), but feedback from agents suggests that only a small fraction of this target is coming forward. Additionally the Belfast Agenda outlines the need to grow the population by 70,000 by 2035. A portion of this growth will be accommodated within the city centre.

3.2	It is important to recognise that there are also established residential communities within the city centre estimated, at 2014, to have a population in the region of 9,000-10,000. In addition to areas of social and affordable housing, there a number of apartments in private ownership and private rented tenures at locations such as Adelaide Street, Castle Street/King Street and Victoria Square. The City Centre boundary is defined in Appendix 1.
3.3	In recent years student housing has also contributed a growing component to the mix of residential accommodation in the city centre. The relocation of Ulster University has been a major catalyst and to date, approximately 5,000 units have been consented. The student population will add a much welcomed vibrancy to the city centre which has to be balanced with other housing tenures to ensure an inclusive and balanced city.
3.4	Members have also raised issue of housing in the city centre and the following motion was supported at Council on 1st September 2016: *"This Council notes that there is high social housing need in Belfast, with over 10,000 households on the waiting list and 6,000 households[1] in housing stress, and that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) is developing a city centre waiting list for site specific developments.* *The Council believes that, together with the NIHE and other partners, there exists a unique opportunity in the city centre, to create social, affordable and private housing schemes and mixed income communities to increase the residential population and build shared, balanced and sustainable communities.* *The Council agrees, as part of the Local Development Plan process and City Centre Regeneration Scheme, to develop with the NIHE and other key partners a City Centre Liveability Plan, which will set out plans to grow the City centre population through an expansion of the housing offer. This plan will include the development of social, affordable and private housing and seek to encourage more families living in the City centre. The plan will also look at the quality of the places and buildings, the need for private and communal open spaces/parks and access to schools essential for family living in the City centre."* Some of the issues around defining liveability are discussed in Appendix 2.

[1] The actual figure quoted by NIHE is in fact now higher than this at 7,134.

	Work Underway or Undertaken to date
3.5	A Population and Housing Growth Study was completed in October 2016 to help inform the preparation of the Local Development Plan (LDP). Once adopted, this LDP will replace the existing development plan which comprises: • Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) 2015 (adopted September 2014); and • Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) Subject Plan (adopted December 2008).
3.6	This research makes comparisons between Belfast's population and other similar sized cities in England and the role of city centre in meeting increasing housing need. At a whole population level, it represents a robust and more up-to-date assessment of housing needs than that included in CCRIS. However, to inform the production of the Plan Strategy, this research will be supplemented with a more detailed breakdown of housing need.
	Department of Communities
3.7	The Department for Communities is currently engaged in the second stage of a Review of the Role and Regulation of the Private Rented Sector. The Council's response is scheduled to be reported to the People and Communities Committee on 7th March 2017. The Review sets out proposals on: • Supply • Affordability • Security of Tenure • Tenancy Management • Property Standards • Dispute Resolution
3.8	It promotes the following proposals in respect of housing supply: • **Supply Proposal 1:** Commission work to gauge the appetite of institutional investors with existing portfolios of private rented sector properties in Great Britain to invest in Northern Ireland and the conditions needed to support such investment; • **Supply Proposal 2:** Explore opportunities to use money available for shared housing through the Fresh Start agreement to incentivise the development of more mixed-tenure housing areas, including private rented accommodation, underpinned by a shared ethos; • **Supply Proposal 3:** Scope the opportunities with housing associations for greater involvement in the private rented sector.

	Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)
3.9	NIHE have stated that there is a high social housing need for Belfast which has grown over recent years. In December 2016, 10,818 households were on the waiting list, of that approximately 7,134 were considered to be in housing stress. They note that Housing Associations are finding it increasingly difficult to acquire land for social housing development. The Housing Executive strongly advocates that additional land should be made available to Housing Associations to develop much needed social housing. If land is excluded to social housing providers, this will seriously affect the ability to meet housing need for all citizens of Belfast, a fundamental human right.
3.10	The Housing Executive believes that the City Centre can provide an opportunity to support mixed tenure developments, which will help ensure that the aim of the City Centre as a shared space can be achieved. NIHE would like to see affordable housing included within the city centre: affordable housing includes social rented homes and well as co-ownership housing and NIHE's Shared Future Housing Programme (Appendix 3).
	Co-Ownership Housing
3.11	Co-Ownership is a Do It Yourself Shared Ownership scheme (DIYSO) exclusively for Northern Ireland. For people who want to own their own home but can't quite afford it, Co-Ownership may help. Co-Ownership is more affordable than a mortgage or private rent and a deposit is often not required. Purchasers take as large a share as they can afford to start with, between 50% and 90% (known as the 'starter share') and pay rent on the remaining share. They can then increase that share at any time ('staircasing'). More details of the Co-Ownership Scheme are set out in Appendix 3.
	Proposals by the Private Rented Sector
3.12	There has been recent interest from private developers in bringing forward Private Rented Sector (PRS) apartments, specifically the creation of build-to-rent PRS blocks. These are established in other cities as part of stand-alone blocks or as a leading element of a multi-tenure development.
3.13	The target group typically comprises key workers, often young urban professionals, who are looking for a comfortable and affordable place to stay for a secure length of tenure where the right life-style setting is important. Added amenities such as a concierge are part of the PRS life-style formula and this is where PRS distinguishes itself from the Build for Sale

	sector. Types of life-style facilities can include workspaces, communal roof terraces and gyms. Additional income can be generated from these facilities, although the prime objective is the contribution they make to place-making and community building.
3.14	In certain markets, a multi-tenure scheme can be led by a PRS block rather than private individual units where it can "de-risk" a development, with front-loading income for the scheme to potentially allow a broad range of tenures to be offered. While the nature of PRS requires a stand-alone block from an investment and management perspective, good design can enable the block to be integrated into a mixed tenure scheme and remain tenure blind. PRS investors usually require a quantum of units to make a development viable. This is normally in the range of 100+ units depending on the area and size of overall scheme, the demand in the area and project viability.
	Proposals for Private Housing for Sale
3.15	Recent developments such as "The Gallery", an apartment block at Dublin Road, suggest there is some interest developing in housing for private sale. This might be expected to continue as other sites, for example, Sirocco, come forward for development. Housing for sale is another important residential element in a successful and vibrant city centre and home ownership is an integral element within new housing areas which can create balanced and sustainable communities.
	Key Workstreams
3.16	The identification of key issues around liveability and increasing the residential population in the city centre and the development of potential options to address them will require joint working across Council and with a range of statutory agencies, in particular, DfC and NIHE**.** Additionally it will involve the private sector, housing associations and those developing the co-ownership model. The following work streams are particularly relevant.
	Local Development Plan
3.17	The Local Development Plan (LDP) is one of the key opportunities for the Council to influence residential development in the city by supporting residential use in areas with the best supporting infrastructure and ensuring that supporting facilities and services are planned to serve the growing population. In addition to the detailed Population and Housing Growth Study, a series of Topic Papers have also been prepared that relate to Population Change and Housing and the City Centre, which offer an opportunity to examine the contribution the City Centre can make to meeting Belfast's housing needs.

3.18	The Preferred Options Paper notes that there are underused, derelict sites and significant areas of brownfield land which we are encouraged to redevelop by regional policy and which lie within the city centre. There are huge opportunities for our city centre, not least given its shared sense of ownership by all communities and the access it offers to employment and other services and amenities, notwithstanding the contribution it would make to the wider economy. Belfast has a rich and varied built heritage, and there are clear opportunities to re-use of vacant buildings to accommodate housing needs in the city centre.
3.19	Extensive public consultation on the preferred options and engagement with key stakeholders is underway with a closing date of 20th April. Alongside this, a series of additional research is to be completed to help inform the next stages of the LDP preparation process. This will include detailed housing market needs analysis to consider the mix of housing to be supplied in terms of the size of units, types, and tenures of housing needed to meet the population and housing growth proposed.
3.20	A report to Planning Committee on 14th March will propose that an Urban Capacity Study will be completed by summer 2017 to consider where new housing can be accommodated, including the contribution that the City Centre can make through the re-use of vacant buildings on upper floors and housing as a component of mixed use developments. The responses to the POP consultation will be brought together with the additional research being undertaken, to help inform the drafting of the LDP documents.
3.21	The timetable for the adoption of the LDP is set out in Appendix 4. It is anticipated that the draft high level Plan Strategy is published for consultation at the end of 2017 and will be subject to an independent examination before adoption. Following adoption of the Plan Strategy, a Local Policies Plan will then be prepared during 2019/20 with a final date for adoption in late 2020.
	Developing an Approach to Housing in the City Centre
3.22	Increasing the residential population within the city centre is a key objective of the City Centre Investment Strategy and the Belfast Agenda, and is an integral part of the Local Development Plan. As major development sites within the city centre come forward with opportunities for residential use, and in advance of the LDP and local plan strategy being adopted, it is important that a measured approach to housing is established across the city

centre to promote inclusion, sustainability, cohesion and balance.

3.23 The objective is to produce high quality, sustainable developments with a mix of tenures that reflect the economic, social and environmental patterns of the city. The mix of tenures could include private for sale, PRS, social and affordable, including co-ownership, in addition to the student housing that is now coming forward. On larger schemes with capacity for significant amounts of residential units, integrated, mixed and blind tenure options should be considered.

3.24 The quality of residential developments has long-term impacts, both on the communities they house, and on the surrounding neighbourhoods. The location and how well they knit into the fabric of existing neighbourhoods and the city-scape are factors will have long term positive and negative implications for the city. Having the necessary physical and social infrastructure alongside the facilities to support development will be important in creating a sustainable and vibrant community. This will include the integration with existing provision combined with access to employment, amenities and effective public transport linkages. It is equally important to consider potential implications for the successful night-time economy and how this important element of the city centre economy and vitality can be maintained.

3.25 High quality design standards are paramount to the success and sustainability of housing development with issues such as space standards, orientation, storage, treatment of communal areas, access to open space etc. requiring careful consideration.

3.26 Key to all of this is viability of the projects, ensuring that high quality schemes come forward in the right location to meet demand. There is potential to look at different sources of funding and financing to assess how they may be combined to achieve a viable and mixed solution.

3.27 **Proposed Actions**

Belfast City Council will work to determine the contribution that the city centre can make to growing Belfast's population and increasing housing supply and seek to establish a balanced approach to housing as developments come forward. This will include:

- Progressing ongoing areas of work with DfC and NIHE and the private sector to develop an agreed approach to the development of a sustainable model for housing of mixed tenure and type in the city centre. This will include private housing for sale; PRS, social housing and other forms of affordable tenure including co-ownership and opportunities for the Shared Future Housing Programme;

- identifying suitable mixed use sites and housing sites;
- collaborating with potential PRS providers to try to ensure that the type, nature and location of proposals are in line with CCIS and are financially viable;
- examining the re-use of vacant space, particularly on upper floors, in city centre buildings and the fiscal policy approaches to encourage their re-use;
- collating intelligence with regard to the local housing market including supply, demand and price points;
- examining the market demand for various tenure types and their viability ;
- considering options and the viability of mixed and blind tenure housing;
- working to support the 'liveability' of the city centre, including the need for community infrastructure to support new housing and the potential for developer contributions to support the provision of such physical and social infrastructure;
- consider the requirements to ensure a balance between City Centre living and existing commercial uses, including those that form part of the night-time economy;
- establishing a network of public open spaces and standards of provision;
- exploring the potential for ensuring quality design approaches for residential and other development to underpin the development of a liveable city centre;
- establishing transport and other infrastructure requirements;
- ascertaining information and funding available from the "Fresh Start" programme in the context of a possible pilot housing project to promote opportunities for shared housing through the development of more mixed-tenure housing areas, underpinned by a shared ethos;
- working with DfC to promote new opportunities to stimulate the growth of the Private Rented Sector;
- ensuring integration with the outputs emerging from the "100 Resilient Cities" project pioneered by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Future Cities Catapult project.

<u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u>

3.28 Equality and good relations screening will be conducted as required, in parallel with any future proposed consultation process.

3.29	Finance and Resource Implications There are no additional resource implications associated with this report
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1: City Centre Boundaries Appendix 2: Liveability Appendix 3: NIHE Comments on Affordable Housing Appendix 4: LDP Timetable

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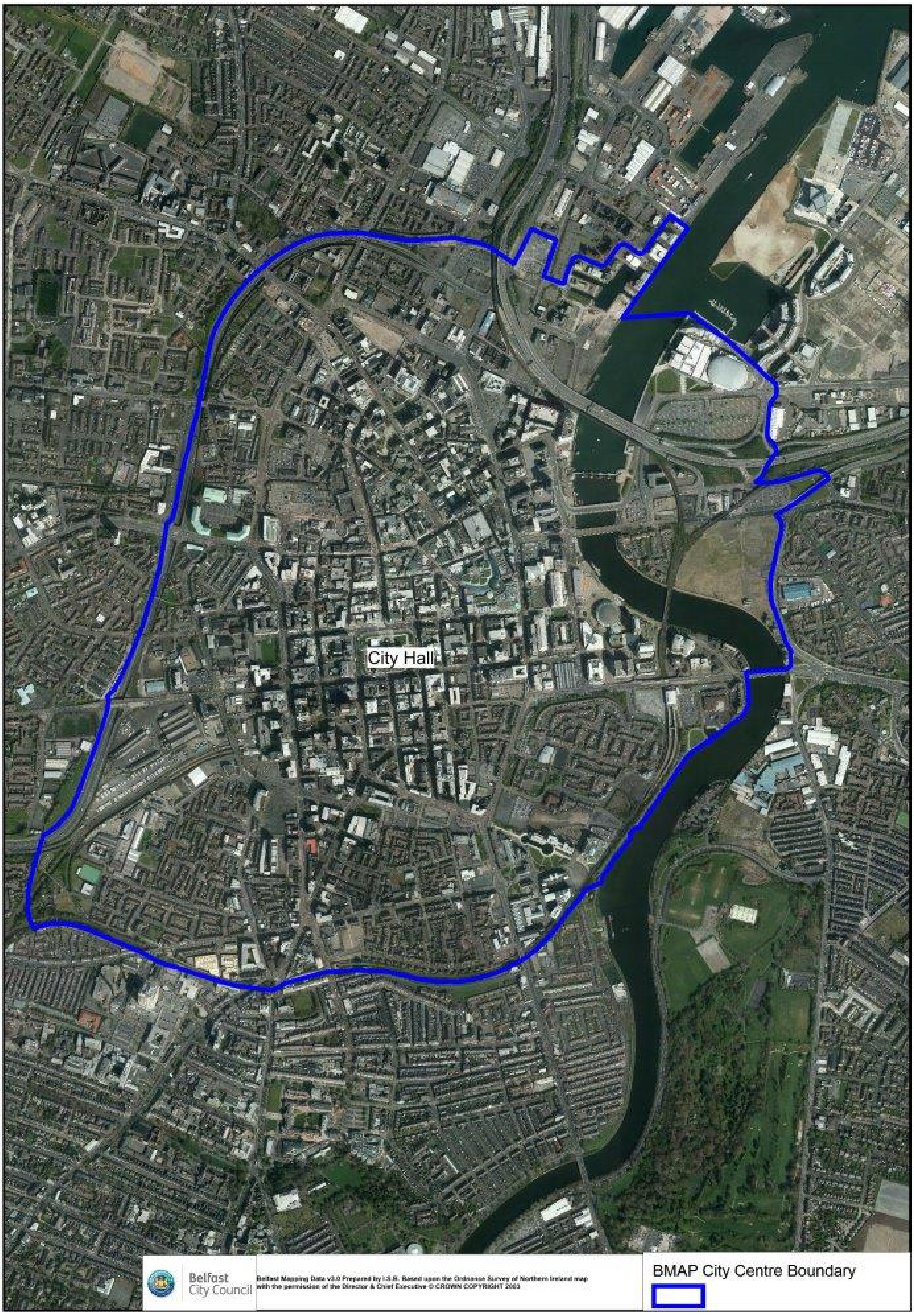
Appendix 1

City Centre Boundary



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Appendix 2

Definition of Liveability

Belfast does not have an agreed definition of "liveability" either for the City Centre or its neighbourhoods. Cities have chosen to define liveability in various ways. For example:

> *"Liveability is the sum of the factors that add up to a community's quality of life—including the built and natural environments, economic prosperity, social stability and equity, educational opportunity, and cultural, entertainment and recreation possibilities".*
>
> **Partners for Livable Communities**
> Washington DC

The term "liveable" city has emerged over the past three decades as part of a surge in discourse on two inter-related ideas, "the future of cities" and "future cities", generating themes and associations of specific phrases such as:

- **Smart Cities** typically refers to enhanced city systems which use data and technology to achieve integrated management and inter-operability, but can also take on wider meanings to reflect social and political forms of smartness;
- **Sustainability and Sustainable Cities** tends to focus on cities designed to minimise environmental impact, and is often associated with low-carbon consumption;
- **Intelligent Cities** is an idea sometimes used interchangeably with 'smart cities', although some of its origin can be traced to the idea of 'virtual cities' in the 1990s. Often 'intelligent city' is used to describe the use of communication infrastructure and digital spaces to strengthen local innovation systems, solve problems and create more responsive public services;
- **Liveable Cities**[1] is a discourse that typically centres on how cities manage growth effectively, to ensure that commuting, the cost of living and the urban environment all meet rising citizen expectations (*note: The discourse on liveable cities described above has a different starting point in the Belfast context in that the city centre has experienced significant depopulation over the last fifty years*);
- **Resilient Cities** is a concept growing in use, and has taken on a dual meaning. It is used both in reference to a capacity to withstand external environmental and social 'shocks', but also in relation to an area's economic adaptability and agility. It has both strong technical and engineering dimensions, but also can refer to qualities that individuals in a city ought to possess or acquire.

[1] What are Future Cities? UK Government Office for Science, June 2014

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Appendix 3

Comments from the Housing Executive

The Housing Executive believes that the City Centre can provide an opportunity to support mixed tenure developments, which will help ensure that the aim of the City Centre as a shared space can be achieved. The Housing Executive strongly supports mixed tenure housing development in all locations, including the City Centre and is of the view that provision of affordable housing as an integral element within new housing areas can create balanced and sustainable communities. NIHE believe that it is important that the City Centre is a location where affordable housing is available; to increase housing choices and to promote equality of opportunity. The Housing Executive would like to see the Council adopt development policies that entail an element of social and intermediate housing within residential developments.

The Housing Executive supports emphasis on good design and would like to see more imaginative and high quality schemes encouraged throughout the City. NIHE believe that a well-designed place can be economically attractive, improve well-being and enhance the environment. They believe that plans for the City Centre should incorporate the principles contained in 'Living Places' Urban Stewardship and Design Guide. The Housing Executive believes that adherence to these principles can allow the public and private sector to jointly develop a vision for Belfast which will enhance the City's environment and image.

The Housing Executive supports the reuse of vacant or under used heritage buildings for housing. They strongly support town centre living initiatives such as 'Living Over the Shop'. These initiatives have been successful in towns across Northern Ireland, in bringing life and vitality to town centres.

NIHE - Shared Future Housing Programme

NIHE have established the Shared Future Housing Programme. The central purpose of this programme is to develop neighbourhoods where people choose to live with others regardless of their religion or race, in a neighbourhood that is safe and welcoming to all, and threatening to no-one. It also aims to support and protect existing areas where people of different backgrounds live together. The Housing Executive has adopted a twin track approach to developing shared areas; firstly through the social new build programme and secondly through existing housing areas. NIHE currently have plans in place for an expansion of Shared Future new build schemes as well as an extensive Shared Neighbourhood Programme for existing estates.

Co- Ownership Housing

Co-Ownership is a Do It Yourself Shared Ownership scheme (DIYSO) exclusively for Northern Ireland. For people who want to own their own home but can't quite afford it, Co-Ownership may help. Co-Ownership is more affordable than a mortgage or a private rent and a deposit is often not required. Purchasers take as large a share as they can afford to start with, between 50% and 90% (known as the 'starter share') pay rent on the remaining share. They can then increase that share at any time ('staircasing').

A mortgage is required to pay for the share of the purchase price with an ability to buy more shares any time after you become the owner. The current cap on the purchase price of the house is £150k. This under review and there may be the flexibility to increase this in certain housing markets such as a city centres. Co-Ownership Housing also provides a complimentary product called Rent to Own which allows people who cannot currently get a mortgage to rent for 3 years with an option to purchase the house after that period. People pay a market rent, but 25% of the rent they pay is saved towards a deposit on the purchase. BCC officers have met with Co-ownership housing and will continue to work with them to see how this could be integrated into appropriate city centre housing and a mixed use model.

Appendix 4

Belfast City Local Development Plan (LDP) 2035 - Timetable

	Key Stages	Notes on Proposed Process	Indicative Timescales
Preliminary Work	**Publication of Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)**	• Final SCI to be submitted to Department for approval	April 2016
	Publication of Timetable	• Consult Statutory Stakeholders • Final SCI to be submitted to Department for approval	May 2016
	Preparation of evidence base to underpin production of Plan Strategy and Local Policies Plan Informal consultation with Elected Members, statutory stakeholders and community representatives	• Commission specific, specialist studies required (e.g. Population and Housing Growth) • Internal Council consultation to develop evidence base and identify key issues • Identification of key issues in relation to specific themes for consultation with relevant statutory consultees and key stakeholders • Consult consultation body (DAERA) with Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating SEA) Scoping Report	May – June 2016
	Publication of Preferred Options Paper	• 12 week public consultation • Publish Topic Papers and supporting evidence alongside POP, including appraisal of alternative options • Publication of Sustainability Appraisal (inc. SEA) Interim Report • Initial EqIA and HRA Screening	September – November 2016
Plan Strategy	Consideration of responses to POP consultation	• Preparation of Public Consultation Report • Informal consultation with key stakeholders	Early 2017
	Publication of Draft Plan Strategy	• 12 week public consultation, followed by 12 week consultation on representations • Publication of Sustainability Appraisal (inc. SEA) and Public Consultation Report • Publication of EqIA and HRA where required	Second half 2017
	Soundness Based Independent Examination	• Advisory report to Central Government • Central Government Issues binding report to Council	Spring 2018
	Adoption of Plan Strategy	• Changes made to finalise Plan Strategy • Publication of final Sustainability Appraisal (inc. SEA) and Public Consultation Report • Publication of final EqIA and HRA where required	Early 2019*
Local Policies Plan	Informal consultation with Elected Members and statutory stakeholders	• Informal consultation with relevant statutory consultees and key stakeholders • Consult consultation body (DAERA) with Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating SEA) Scoping Report	Spring 2018 – Early 2019
	Publication of Draft Local Policies Plan	• 12 week public consultation, followed by 12 week consultation on representations • Publication of final Sustainability Appraisal (inc. SEA) and Public Consultation Report • Publication of final EqIA and HRA where required	Spring - Autumn 2019
	Soundness Based Independent Examination	• Advisory report to Central Government • Central Government Issues binding report to Council	Early 2020
	Adoption of Local Policies Plan	• Advisory report to Central Government • Central Government Issues binding report to Council	Late 2020*
Monitor and Review	Monitoring and Review of LDP, including: • Annual Monitoring Reports • 5 and 10 year review (leading to commencement of a replacement Local Development Plan)	• Advisory report to Central Government • Central Government Issues binding report to Council	On going

Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA))

** May require a longer period depending on changes required following Independent Examination*

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Belfast City Council

CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Subject:	Financial Reporting – Quarter 3 2016/17
Date:	8 March 2017
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, Director of Development
Contact Officer:	David Orr; Business Manager, Development Department

Is this report restricted?	**Yes**	☐	**No**	☑
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	☑	**No**	☐

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	This report presents the quarter 3 financial position for the City Growth Regeneration Committee including a forecast of the year end outturn. It includes a reporting pack which contains a summary of the financial indicators and an executive summary (Appendix 1). It also provides a more detailed explanation of each of the relevant indicators and the forecast outturn for the year.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • note the report and the associated financial reporting pack.
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	**Current and Forecast Financial Position 2016/17** The Quarter 3 position for the Committee is an under spend of £343k (2.8%) (which includes additional income), with the forecast year end position being an under spend of £289k (1.8%) which is well within the acceptable tolerance which is 3%.

3.2	The main reasons for the Committee under spend relate to vacant posts across a number of services, receipt of additional income in Off Street Car Parking and an under spend of programme costs in Development Directorate and Parks Estates.
3.3	Members will recall that the Strategic Policy and Resources (SP&R) Committee decided at its meeting on the 18 November 2017 to cap in year departmental cash limits at the Quarter 2 forecast levels to offset the rates clawback advised by the Land and Property Service (LPS). Therefore there will be no reallocation of this money.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	Appendix 1 - Quarter 3 Performance Report

Performance

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Quarterly Finance Report

Report Period: Quarter 3, 2016/17

Dashboard

Quarter 3, 2016/17

Revenue Section	Page
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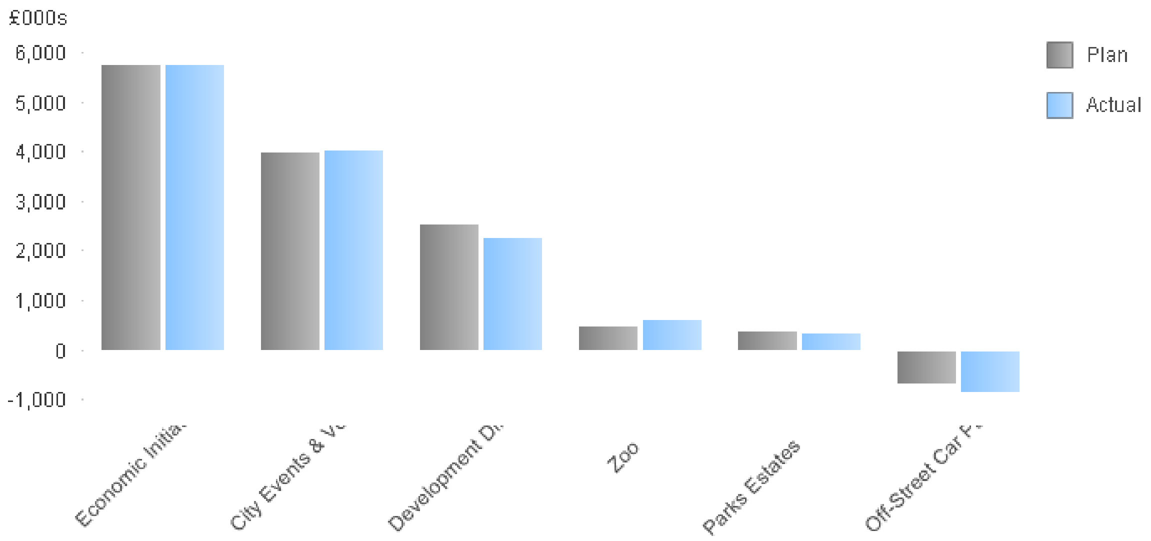
Level 3 YTD

Committee	YTD	YTD Var £000s	Var %	Forecast	Forecast Var £000s	Var %
Economic Initiatives & Internat Devpt		(2)	(0.0)%		(9)	(0.1)%
City Events & Venues		30	0.7%		78	1.7%
Development Directorate		(269)	(10.7)%		(358)	(10.4)%
Zoo		121	25.7%		130	13.5%
Parks Estates		(54)	(14.9)%		(30)	(7.9)%
Off-Street Car Parking		(168)	25.9%		(100)	10.8%
Total		**(343)**	**(2.8)%**		**(289)**	**(1.8)%**

Committee Net Revenue Expenditure: Year to Date Position



The **City Growth and Regeneration Committee** budget is under spent by £343k, or 2.8% of its net budgeted expenditure of £12.4 million, at the end of quarter three.

The Committee's budget is made up of the following profit centres:

- **Economic Initiatives** (DEV):- Tourism, Culture, Heritage and Arts; Economic Development; Markets; European Unit and International Relations
- **City Events and Venues** (DEV): City Events; Belfast Waterfront; Ulster Hall
- **Development Directorate** (DEV): Urban Development; Business Research and Development; Directorate
- **Estates Management** (PKS/CNS): Malone House; Belfast Castle; Stables Restaurant; Adventure Playground
- **Zoo** (PKS/CNS)
- **Off Street Car Parking** (H&ES/CNS)

Economic Initiatives & International Development (EIID) is under spent by £2,422 (0%), Development Directorate is under spent by £269,261 (10.7%); Parks Estates Management is under spent by £53,911 (14.9%); and Off Street Car Parking is under budget by £167,838 (25.9%) whilst The Zoo is over budget by £120,683 (25.7%) and City Events are over budget by £29,695 (0.7%) at the end of Quarter 3.

There are four main areas that give rise to the current overall £343k (2.8%) under spend within the City Growth and Regeneration Committee budget at the end of Quarter 3. These are as follows:

1. Gross income was £24k more than budgeted income to the end of December 2016. Whilst more income was received than planned in Economic Initiatives and International Development (£61k); Parks Estates (£20k) and Off Street Parking (£224k) this was offset by less income being received than planned in the Zoo (£193k); Development Directorate (£86k) and City Events and Venues of (£2k).

2. Employee costs are £190k less than budget with under spends in Development

Directorate (£201k), Parks Estates (£15k) and EIID (£83k) as a result of vacant posts which are offset by additional employee costs in the Zoo (£54k); City Events and Venues (24k) and Off Street Car Parking (£31k).

3. Premises expenditure was £97k above budget with over spends in EIID (£22k); City Events and Venues (£44k); Parks Estates (£6k) and Off Street Parking (£25k). With the exception of City Events and Venues these are primarily profiling issues which will self correct during the financial year

4. Supplies and Services expenditure was £220k below budget. This was primarily due to under spends in Development Directorate (£154k); City Events and Venues (£22k); the Zoo (£116k) and Parks Estates (£24k) which are then offset by additional expenditure in EIID (£96k). These are primarily profiling issues which will self correct during the financial year.

Service Analysis

EIID are under spent by £2,422 at the end of Quarter 3.
(Budgeted Net Expenditure: £5,723,220; Actual Net Expenditure: £5,720,797).

EIID is under spent by £2k. There is increased income of £61k received within City Markets for additional stallage hire fees and there is an under spend of £83k in employee expenditure as a result of vacant posts. These under spends are offset by an over spend in Supplies and services (£96k) which is mainly profiling and will self correct during the financial year; by an over spend in premises (£22k) in relation to the Innovation Factory and an additional unforeseen cost incurred for a compensation claim of £24k within City Markets.

City Events and Venues are over spent by £29,695 at the end of Quarter 3.
(Budgeted Net Expenditure: £3,989,302; Actual Net Expenditure: £4,018,998).

City Events is over spent by £30k as a result of increased unbudgeted major event programme costs. City Venues is on budget at the end of period 9.

Directorate are under spent by £269,261 at the end of Quarter 3.
(Budgeted Net Expenditure: £2,523,243; Actual Net Expenditure: £2,253,982)

The under spend within Directorate is attributable to decreased spend within employee costs of £201k and supplies and services reduction of £154k in regards to less than anticipated spend within Urban Development unit. These are offset by reduced income of £86k in relation to decreased Belfast Bike subscriptions and usage fees.

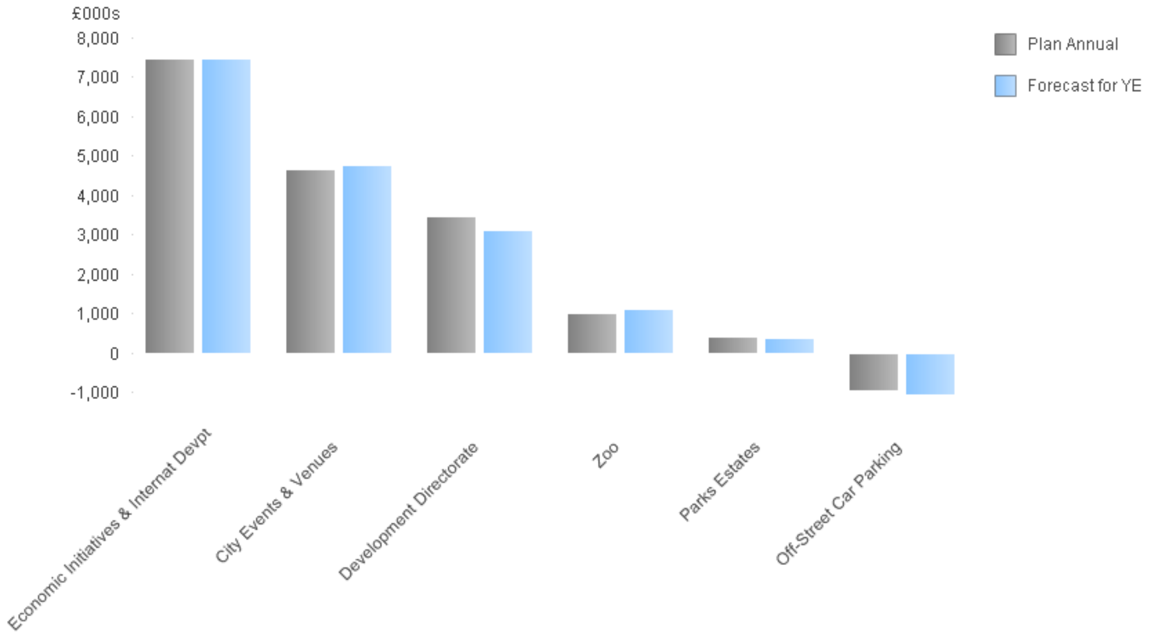
The Zoo is over spent by £120,683 at the end of Quarter 3.

(Budgeted Net Expenditure: £469,336; Actual Net Expenditure: £590,019)
Net expenditure at Quarter 3 is £121k over budget due primarily to reduced income of £125k against budget. The Zoo shop is £58k under budget due to the impact of Easter falling outside the financial year being greater than anticipated. Utilities and supplies and services expenditure have been tightly controlled to offset some of these issues.

Parks Estates are under spent by £53,911 at the end of Quarter 3.
(Budgeted Net Expenditure: £361,500; Actual Net Expenditure: £307,589)
Parks Estates net expenditure at quarter 3 is under spent by £54k (14.9%) and is due to under spends due to vacant posts, utility contracts and reduction in advertising which will be addressed by year end with the new caterer now in place. Rental income has also exceeded budget by £19k.

Off Street Parking is under budget by £167,838 at the end of Quarter 3.
(Budgeted Net Expenditure:-£648,654;Actual Net Expenditure: -£816,492)
Off Street Car Parking is under budget at the end of quarter 3 mainly due to increased income of £224k (PCN, pay and display, season tickets and fees) which has been offset by additional employee costs £31k and premises costs of £25k. It should be noted that approximately one third of the additional income relates to Christmas 2016 charges for parking against Christmas 2015 which had no charges.

Committee Net Revenue Expenditure: Forecast for Year End



It is forecast that the **City Growth and Regeneration Committee** budget will be under spent by £289,000, or 1.8%, of its budgeted net expenditure of almost £16million at year end.

The Economic Initiatives and International Development unit are forecast to be under spent by £9k (0.1%) in relation to vacant posts.

The City Events and Venues unit are forecast to be over spent by £78k (1.7%) at year end as a result of increased unbudgeted major event programme costs.

Directorate are forecast to be under spent by £358k (10.4%) at year end due to a reduction in programme costs and vacant posts within the Urban Development Unit offset by reduced income within the Coca-Cola Belfast Bike Scheme.

The **Zoo** is forecast to be £130k (13.5%) over spent at year end as the income impact of Easter on the shop has been underestimated and other income generating opportunities were not in place as early in the financial year as expected

Parks Estates is forecast to be under spent by £30k (7.9%) at year end due to under spends in utilities and supplies and services.

Off Street Car Parking
It is forecast that Off Street Car parking will be £100k (10.8%) under budget as a result of increased income.

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Section Expenditure Budgetary Analysis & Forecast

	Plan YTD £000s	Actuals YTD £000s	Variance YTD £000s	% Variance	Annual Plan 2016/2017 £000s	Forecast for Y/E at P9 £000s	Forecast Variance £000s	% Variance
Economic Initiatives & Internat Devpt	5,723	5,721	(2)	(0.0)%	7,426	7,417	(9)	(0.1)%
City Events & Venues	3,989	4,019	30	0.7%	4,631	4,709	78	1.7%
Development Directorate	2,523	2,254	(269)	(10.7)%	3,442	3,084	(358)	(10.4)%
Zoo	469	590	121	25.7%	961	1,091	130	13.5%
Parks Estates	362	308	(54)	(14.9)%	382	352	(30)	(7.9)%
Off-Street Car Parking	(649)	(816)	(168)	25.9%	(928)	(1,028)	(100)	10.8%
Total	**12,418**	**12,075**	**(343)**	**(2.8)%**	**15,914**	**15,625**	**(289)**	**(1.8)%**

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Belfast City Council

CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Subject:	Car Parking Strategy – Public Consultation
Date:	8th March 2017
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Anne Doherty, Planning & Transport Officer

Is this report restricted?	**Yes**		**No**	X
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	**Yes**	X	**No**	

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the outcome of the public consultation on the Council's draft Car Parking Strategy, seek endorsement from Members on the proposed final Strategy and outline next steps for implementation.
1.2	The Strategy makes recommendations relating to Council owned car parks as well as car parking provision outside our ownership. A key component of the Strategy is to facilitate and encourage stakeholders to work together to achieve the vision and objectives. The Council wishes to provide a strong civic leadership role for the promotion of a modern, safe, accessible and integrated transportation system for the city of Belfast and its wider regions.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • note the main issues raised during the public consultation process; • agree the Council's recommended position on how these will influence the final Strategy content; and • endorse the final Strategy for publication and note the proposed next steps for the

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

3.4 There is currently a high volume of commuters (people going to work and parking all day) travelling by car to Belfast which is leading to problems of increasing congestion and associated emissions resulting in poor air quality in a number of areas in the city. It is recognised that there is limited capacity in the city's highway network and therefore the promotion of public transport along with appropriate provision for cars and a rationalisation of car parking is part of a balanced approach is outlined in the strategy. The Strategy also puts an emphasis on access for consumers and short business use.

3.5 The public consultation responses showed strong consensus on the following issues:

- the need to introduce residents' parking schemes in areas affected by all day commuter parking (a responsibility of DFI);
- the proposal for consolidation of low quality surface car parking sites into multi storey/underground car parks with the caveat that adjacent local communities are consulted on the location and design;
- the setting up of a Parking Forum with a number of groups expressing a willingness to participate in the Forum;
- the need to improve quality, safety and security of car parking provision and to encourage car parking operators to achieve Park Mark standard;
- the need to improve the information on parking availability and use of smart technology; and
- measures to deter all day commuter parking in free car parks at district centres to allow turn over and provision for shoppers.

3.6 A number of areas were highlighted that were missing from the strategy or needed more emphasis:

- the need to consult with local communities on any proposals to consolidate surface car parks and develop multi-storey provision;
- improved enforcement to prevent parking at bus stops, parking across dropped kerbs, parking on pavements and to prevent potential fraud and misuse of Blue Badges; and
- parking initiatives to promote the evening economy and provision to cater for overnight/weekend visitors to hotels travelling by car.

3.7 The response from the Department for Infrastructure is generally supportive of the strategy and action plan, however, they would advocate for a clearer message on the need to reduce

	the supply of long stay commuter car parking in the city to support more efficient and cost effective public transport. They call for a more collaborative working approach on a number of issues which would be welcomed by the Council.
3.8	The response from the Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce outlined a number of areas of agreement in principle which include: • support for control of commuter parking in residential areas; • support for the extension of regulated on-street parking in the city centre; • turnover of on-street car parking by better enforcement and appropriate charging and appropriate long stay car parking being provided; • development of surface car parking sites; • development of smart signage and parking app; and • provision for coach parking.
3.9	However, BCTC have outlined a wide number of concerns in particular to any measures that will deter car access to the city. Their view is that a large number of shoppers and business users use the car to access Belfast and any steps to deter car access would be detrimental to city businesses. In addition, it is the view of BCTC that the current public transport system does not provide an adequate alternative. Council officers met with representatives from the BCTC to discuss the areas of concern raised. It was highlighted that the strategy recognises that car parking in suitable amounts and locations is vital for the city centre to function properly. However it is considered that a balanced approach is necessary between car parking and other transport modes and between the needs of short-stay and long-stay parking users. The strategy is in line with the Council's Regeneration & Investment Strategy and the Belfast Agenda which focuses on supporting vitality, jobs, shoppers, tourism and successful businesses in the city centre and therefore our approach is to support this, whilst acknowledging that there is a need to manage demand and in particular reduce all day commuter parking in the city. It should be recognised that a large number of city centre car parks are used all day by commuters and this reduces the availability of short term spaces for shoppers and visitors.
3.10	The strategy acknowledges that investment in public transport infrastructure and sustainable modes is necessary if car dependency is to be reduced and the Council is working jointly with DfI and Translink to support projects such as the Transport Hub, Belfast Rapid Transit and the implementation of the Belfast Bicycle Network Plan.

3.11 The Department for Communities response supported the Council's vision, objectives and priorities for action. DfC would concur that car parking is an important resource that supports the economic and social vitality of the city, but as the strategy emphasises, the high proportion of all day commuter parking in the core of a city centre uses up valuable space that could be used for broader regenerative purposes and restricts parking opportunities for shorter term uses such as shopping, business and leisure activities, all of which are key to the future regeneration of the city centre.

3.12 Appendix 1 provides further details on the main comments emerging from the public consultation process and our suggested response. Appendix 2 contains the proposed final strategy and action plan. It is proposed an executive summary will be devised for the final version.

Implementation

3.13 The City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy identified car parking as a major issue for Belfast City Centre and recommended that the Council works with the Department for Infrastructure to develop and implement a strategy for car parking for Belfast. Representatives from DfI have been involved in the project steering group and the process has involved engagement with a wide range of partners and stakeholders. **The strategy has outlined a number of objectives and priorities for action which are dependent on external bodies such as DfI, Translink and private car operators to deliver.** It is proposed the delivery of the action plan will be cross departmental with the City Centre Development Team taking the lead and involvement from the City & Neighbourhood Services department, Planning & Place and Property & Projects.

3.14 The proposed next steps include:

Key next steps	Lead Department
Publication of final Car Parking Strategy and action plan including timeframe for implementation	City & Neighbourhood Services
Review of Council's off street parking provision to consider issues such as pricing, operation and naming through the internal Parking Order Working Group	City & Neighbourhood Services (already underway)
Establish joint working arrangements	It is proposed that the governance and

	with DfI and consider priorities such as the review of the current city centre car parking provision/location and options to progress the implementation of residents parking schemes	delivery will be raised at the Transport Workshop meetings chaired by the Chief Executive with involvement from elected members, Council officers and senior officials from DfI and Translink.
	Establish the Parking Forum - Agree terms of reference and membership; and - agree priorities for action such as improved parking information/smart technology.	City Centre Development
	Provide guidance to inform the development of the Council's Local Development Plan in terms of transport policy and the review of the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan.	Planning & Place / DfI
	Review of Council owned surface car parking provision to consider options for consolidation and redevelopment	City Centre Development & Property & Projects
	Report to Strategic Policy & Resources Committee to outline resources required for the implementation of the car parking strategy action plan.	City Centre Development & City & Neighbourhood Services

Finance and Resource Implications

3.15 If endorsed the recommendations will have future implications on Council revenue such as the potential loss of parking revenue, asset rationalisation of some car parks, costs of some improving some car parks or capital to build new ones and the introduction of charging in some free car parks in district centres and the introduction of free disabled car parking in Council owned off-street car parks. These have not been quantified in the research and will be reported to a future Strategic Policy & Resources Committee once the strategy is finalised.

Equality & Good Relations Implications

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

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Appendix 1 – Car Parking Strategy

A summary of the main comments and our suggested response is outlined below:

Comments	Suggested approach
DFI is generally supportive of the strategy and action plan, however it is the Department’s view that there is too much commuter parking in Belfast and the Council’s strategy missed the opportunity to provide a clear message on this issue.	The strategy acknowledges that there is spare car parking capacity in the city and it is proposed going forward to review the current car parking provision with DfI to ensure appropriate provision is in the right location to promote accessibility and reduce congestion in the city.
BCTC stated that it was incorrect to state that there is surplus supply of car parking in the city as many of the spaces are located in areas where there is low demand, whereas in areas of high demand there is an under-provision of spaces. Views were expressed that the proposals do not include forecasts of future parking demand and that a number of new office, hotel and other developments will generate a considerable demand for new parking.	Surveys have indicated that there is currently spare capacity in excess of 10,000 spaces for car parking in and around Belfast City centre. However the strategy recognises that some individual car parks operate at capacity whilst there is spare capacity in the overall provision. As stated above, the strategy proposes to review the current car parking provision with DfI to ensure appropriate provision is in the right location and this will include measures to improve the quality of parking and information on parking availability. The review will also take account of new development planned for the city.
BCTC expressed the view that if the City is to grow, there will be more car journeys to, from and within the City. These will require an increase in parking provision and the strategy’s aspiration of maintaining levels is inadequate and will damage the City’s prospects of future success.	The strategy highlights that there is a high volume of commuters travelling by car to Belfast which is leading to problems of increasing congestion and associated emissions resulting in poor air quality in a number of areas in the city. It is recognised that there is a limited capacity in the city’s highway network and therefore the promotion of public transport along with the appropriate provision for cars as part of a balanced approach is outlined in the strategy.
The Strategy should not prohibit long term parking. Provision for commuter parking will be essential to promote future office developments.	The strategy proposes that long stay parking should only occur in off-street sites away from central areas of the city centre, on the edge of the Inner Ring. Central areas should be prioritised for short stay parking and for Blue Badges holders. The need to reduce all day commuter parking is in line with the Programme for Government Indicator 25: Increase the use of public transport and active travel. It states that “achieving a shift from the car to bus or rail services for longer journeys and to walking or cycling for shorter journeys will reduce demand on the road network allowing it to work more efficiently; assist in the better movement of freight; reduce emissions and improve health by increasing levels of physical activity. Public transport also contributes to economic growth, competitiveness and supports social inclusion. Cycling and walking have significant health and social benefits for individuals”.
Using parking policy to discourage the use of the private car	The strategy is proposing a step change and acknowledges that investment in

before having a modern public alternative is irrational, counterproductive and economically damaging to our city.	public transport infrastructure and sustainable modes is necessary if car dependency is to be reduced. The Council is working jointly with DfI and Translink to support projects such as the Transport Hub, Belfast Rapid Transit and the implementation of the Belfast Bicycle network plan.
The Council's strategy stated that all on-street parking in the city core area should be restricted. DFI stated that this is a considerable undertaking and will involve the introduction of residents parking zones. It is suggested by DFI that they progress proposals to extend current controlled parking zones incorporating residents schemes in partnership with BCC.	It is suggested that the wording in the strategy is changed to state 'extend current controlled parking zones incorporating resident schemes in partnership with BCC' This will be in line with the proposal in the PfG to reduce demand 'Extend the Belfast City Centre Controlled Parking Zone and increase enforcement'.
What is the source of parking figures?	Belfast Parking Survey (BPS) 2013 Report, carried out by Transport NI's partnering consultant Amey was used. This reports the results of the biennial parking survey within the centre of Belfast, with the data collected during October 2013. Additional survey work was carried out by consultants on BCC sites outside the city centre which were not included in the 2013 report.
A number of comments were received stating that car parking tariffs are too expensive in Belfast in particular for all day commuter parking.	The baseline review found that parking is affordable in Belfast in comparison to similar cities. An aim of the strategy is to influence choice of travel mode through demand management measures such as parking supply and pricing policies. It is suggested that future changes to parking tariffs should be discussed jointly by DfI, BCC and private operators.
In addition the following comments were made in relation to pricing: • the need for a pricing structure that prioritises shoppers and visitors for day trippers and weekend trippers • Parking costs in the core city centre should reflect the convenience of the location; however, on-street parking time should be extended to perhaps 3 hours; • Increase in effective enforcement by Traffic Attendants would deter meter feeding etc and increase turnaround of on-street car parking	The strategy proposes that the core city centre area should only be used for short stay parking and suggests that measures to cater for day/weekend trippers is discussed at the Parking Forum. BCC have no remit in relation to pricing, duration and enforcement of on-street parking however it is suggested joint working with DfI to identify measures to tackle the issue.
The strategy proposes that there is a review of on-street and off-street tariffs. DFI suggested that where practical, future changes to on and off street tariffs should be discussed jointly by DfI and BCC and private sector operators.	Agreed. The Council suggest that the Parking Forum could provide a mechanism to discuss parking tariffs and enforcement.
The Strategy must identify new multi-storey car parks that will address the future need generated by a cluster of individual new developments.	The Strategy does identify areas where new multi-storey provision may be appropriate subject to the planning process.

Consideration needs to be given to a pricing structure in MSCPs that encourage day trippers; weekend trippers and day shoppers	Agreed this will be considered in more detail through the proposed Parking Forum
The development of new Multi-Storey car parks should make provision for secure cycle parking on their premises, particularly on lower-storeys to act as an incentive for people to cycle.	Agreed
A number of respondents queried what criteria will be used to identify the sites for Multi Storey Car Parks? Will communities be consulted on this matter? How is traffic flow, air quality and visual aesthetics taken into consideration	The Council will amend the action to ensure any proposal for consolidation of low quality surface car parking sites into multi storey/underground car parks will be carried out in consultation with adjacent local communities on the location and design issues.
One of the proposed multi-storey car parks should be placed in the heart of the Linen Quarter rather than based at the “outer ring”.	For clarification the strategy does not propose multi-storey provision based at the outer ring. A key thrust of the Council’s Linen Quarter study is the reduction of car movements in this area. The strategy proposes that long stay parking should only occur in off-street sites away from central areas of the city centre, on the edge of the Inner Ring and this is in a short distance from the Linen Quarter area.
Better enforcement against potential fraud and misuse of Blue Badges	BCC have no remit in relation to enforcement but recognise that there is an issue of misuse of blue badges. It is suggested joint working with DfI to identify measures to tackle the issue.
Support for free Blue Badge use at Council car parks however the access to these car parks must be considered	Noted and the access point will be added to the strategy
Measures to prevent parking at bus stops, parking across dropped kerbs and parking on pavements Any consideration of parking demand must include cars parking on unrestricted streets and pavements rather than just those parking in allocated on-street spaces	It is suggested that the issue of pavement parking should be tackled by better enforcement and improved information systems on parking availability. It is proposed that the issue of pavement parking should be discussed jointly by DfI, PSNI and BCC.
Proper consideration must be given to how car parking at district centres is controlled so free long stay spaces are not taken up by owners / employees of surrounding commercial premises and as a consequence not available for shoppers / visitors.	The Strategy acknowledges that BCC parking sites outside of the city centre are predominantly free. There is high occupancy of these sites with a significant number of all-day parkers. If capacity is to be managed, this level of all day parking needs to be reduced. It is suggested that a modest charge per hour is considered to deter all day commuter parking. This would free up spaces for people making short trips to the area for shopping, leisure, or business/ personal reasons.
Translink would have major concerns around the practicality of an Inner Ring Shuttle Bus given our experience with the old Centre Link service which had to be funded by both the	The Council would agree with this approach and will modify the action.

private and public sector. However modifications of the existing network(s) to provide an inner ring shuttle bus service may well be possible.	
The area defined as the core city centre area extends over too large an area and should be confined within the four points of Shaftesbury Square, Castle Street, Fredrick Street & Oxford Street;	It is not the remit of this strategy to review the city centre boundary. However, the comment is noted and for information the boundary of the core city centre area will be reviewed by the Council under the Local Development Plan process.
Visit Belfast is particularly pleased to see the inclusion of Coach Park provision. It should be close to the City Centre, attractions, hotels. in an area away from high crime rate	The criteria for the location are noted.
Visit Belfast stated that there needs to be flexibility in pricing of car parking such as hotels being able to offer reduced car parking for day, overnight and multiple night stays. Most car travelling overnight visitors for a city break or part of a touring holiday will want parking for 24 hour plus. How to deal with this has not been flagged in the report Parking initiatives to promote the evening economy are needed.	Agreed. The Council suggest that the Parking Forum could provide a mechanism to discuss how these needs can be catered for.
Section 2.3.11 refers to a range of key relevant policy documents which have shaped, and will continue to shape transport, parking and planning policy. Department for Communities would respectively submit that their Regeneration Masterplans should be added to the list and that, as far as possible, their respective strategies should be complimentary	Agreed
Belfast Harbour Commissioners stated that the Corporation Street/Sailortown area is subject to all day commuter parking congestion and going forward has the potential to be exacerbated by the opening of the new UU campus and therefore consideration should be given to the redistribution of underutilised space. BHC welcomed the reference to the continued engagement of stakeholders and communities to develop and improve sustainable transport alternatives.	This will be considered under the review of provision and location of car parking with DfI.

Citizen Space responses

The table below outlines the results from survey questions relating to the main sections of the draft strategy.

Draft Car Parking Strategy	**Strongly agree/ agree**	**Strongly disagree/disagree**	
Vision for the Strategy *"Belfast is a city offering sufficient, high quality and appropriately located parking which supports economic development and regeneration within the city by balancing the requirements of residents, businesses, commuters and visitors"*	42%	38%	The general comments relating to the vision showed that car parking is a highly divisive issue with respondents either requesting that there should be increased car parking provision at lower cost or that car parking provision should be restricted in the city centre to improve the amenity for residents and visitors to the city. It is suggested that the vision remains unchanged as we are advocating a balanced approach to car parking provision in the city The strategy recognises that car parking in suitable amounts and locations is vital for the city centre to function properly. A balance is therefore necessary between car parking and other transport modes and between the needs of short-stay and long-stay parking users.
Understand the rationale for developing the strategy	74%	6%	The approach of the Council in preparing the car parking strategy was welcomed by respondents.
Key issues, challenges, opportunities identified	50%	14%	There was general agreement on the key issues with comments requesting more effective enforcement of parking infringements mentioned.
Objective 1: Ensuring appropriate provision and location of car parking to support and improve the economic vitality of the city centre and district centres.	66%	8%	Comments related to this objective showed support for the proposal to consolidate low quality surface car parking sites into multi storey/underground car parks with the caveat that adjacent local communities are consulted on the location and design. Other comments requested improvements to the public transport system and support for residential parking schemes.
Objective 2: Ensuring car parking provision encourages sustainable commuter travel, especially for journeys into the City Centre and supports access by public transport, cycling and walking.	61%	19%	Comments relating to this objective requested improvements to the public transport system, the need to provide secure cycle parking and the need to restrict traffic levels in the city centre.
Objective 3: Minimising the potentially negative impacts of parking on residential communities in the city particularly in inner city areas.	67%	10%	There was strong support for the introduction of resident parking schemes with a number of comments highlighting the negative impact of commuter parking on residential areas.
Objective 4: Work with stakeholders to improve the quality of parking and information available, ideally	72%	4%	There was strong support on the need to provide better information on parking availability in the city along with improvements to the overall quality of car park provision.

through technology and in particular develop a new parking signage and information system that supports parking and wider applications.			
Complementary Objectives • Promote sustainable commuter travel, especially for journeys into the city centre and support access by public transport, cycling and walking • Identify opportunities to provide secure bicycle and coach parking in appropriate city centre locations • Ensuring appropriate provision for taxis within the city centre	62%	12%	A number of respondents requested the need to improve the cycle infrastructure in the city and expressed the view that public transport needs improvement to offer a suitable alternative to the private car.

Belfast Parking Strategy and Action Plan

Table of Contents

Executive Summary
(To be completed)

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The city of Belfast is changing. It is growing and continues to seek more investment, more jobs, more opportunities, and to be a better place to live. The city's transportation network and in particular it's parking have a key role to play in achieving a vibrant competitive city which can compete on a global scale.

In recognition of the role of parking in contributing to the success of the city, and as outlined in the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy published in September 2015, a strategy for city centre parking is needed. The actions and interventions proposed here will complement the Regeneration Strategy's following core principles: increasing the employment and residential population; managing the city's retail offer; maximising tourism opportunities; creating a green, walkable and cyclable city centre; create regional learning and innovation centres; and promoting shared space and social impact. The actions and interventions within this document include the innovative use of technology to make parking 'smarter' and promote better use of city centre space to provide the right environment for investment and for city user's and while enabling further city development.

On 1st April 2015 the Department for Regional Development (now renamed as the Department for Infrastructure – DfI) transferred all of its off-street car parks (excluding Park and Ride/Park and Share) to local councils as part of local government reform. The Council is therefore now responsible for the operation of 30 car parks that were previously operated by the DfI, however on-street car parking remains under DfI's control along with other transport responsibilities.

Local Government Reform also provided local councils with a range of new place-shaping and economic powers including developing a new Local Development Plan as part of the wider planning function and community planning. This Strategy will seek to inform the development of future statutory plans and policies developed under the Council's new powers.

The current city centre parking strategy is set out in the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP) which continues as the statutory transport plan for Belfast. It was developed to manage the transportation issues and is currently under review.

1.2 Vision

As outlined in the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy, fundamental to Belfast's success will be the city's ability to continue to attract investment and retain a competitive advantage over other cities. This means being competitive in terms of tax, rates, skills and incentives. But it also means having a lifestyle offering that will attract and retain people. The role of transport and car parking is clear: they are key elements of how a city functions, not only in terms of business but including the broader 'lifestyle' offering.

Car parking clearly is an important resource that supports the economic and social vitality of the city, however, it also can have some negative impacts that need to be effectively managed and addressed. Primarily these issues are associated with inappropriate parking provision. For example, a high proportion of all day commuter parking in the core of a city centre uses up valuable space that could be used for broader regenerative purposes and restricts parking opportunities for shorter term uses such as shopping, business and leisure activities. Similarly, the ability of commuters to park for free in predominantly residential areas prevents those residents from parking and negatively impacts on the quality of the area and can undermine on the viability of local businesses that depend on a turnover of parking spaces.

Our vision for this strategy is as follows:

"Belfast is a city offering sufficient, high quality and appropriately located parking which supports economic development and regeneration within the city by balancing the requirements of residents, businesses, commuters and visitors."

This Strategy was developed through close working relationships between Belfast City Council (BCC), DfI and Transport NI (as the highway authority), as well as consultation with Elected Members, members of the public and other city stakeholders. A joint approach with these stakeholders will be needed in order to achieve the objectives within the Strategy that Belfast needs to continue growing and in order to fulfil its role as the capital city and the economic driver for the region.

2 Context & Baseline Review

This chapter firstly considers why people need to park as this is fundamental to understanding how the issues should be addressed. It then moves on to consider the impacts that peoples' parking choices have, as many parking issues are common in numerous towns and cities. It then considers parking within Belfast city centre, examining parking supply, location and the current approach to policy. This chapter also details the consultation that has taken place in preparation of this strategy.

2.1 Why People Park

For many people the private car is an important means of accessing Belfast, particularly for trips to work, shopping and leisure. Most of these trips result in an act of parking near to or at the intended destination. The availability of somewhere to park is therefore a key consideration for these users, however, parking cost and convenience are also significant influences as is the availability of practical alternatives including use of public transport.

Some users may only need to park for a few minutes or for a few hours, such as if they are attending a meeting, using their car as part of their job, going on a shopping trip or visiting a tourist attraction. However people who park for work often need to make use of a single parking space for upwards of eight hours per day.

Any consideration of parking needs to take into account the various reasons why people need to park their vehicles. It also needs to consider whether these parking acts need to be made at all if other transport options offer the user a viable alternative. A careful balance is needed between the level of parking provided and the comparative viability of using other forms of transport to make the same trip.

> "A careful balance is needed between the level of parking provided and the comparative viability of using other forms of transport to make the same trip"

Within cities, it is the movement, connectivity and transportation of people that can be key drivers to promoting and sustaining economic growth. Parking is a crucial strand of delivering a 'joined up' city transportation strategy, and Belfast is no exception. As the city continues to grow, both in terms of population and employment, pressures on the transport network will increase and therefore careful ongoing management and planning are required.

2.2 The Impacts of Parking

Whilst an efficient city parking system can help to sustain a local economy, there are a number of considerations needed in order to reduce the adverse impacts that parking often creates. These can be attributed to a combination of user behaviour and the level of infrastructure provision. For example, some users may have always parked in particular locations as they have been able to, yet there may now be unacceptable local impacts associated with this activity. In other areas, an over-supply of free or cheap parking can increase traffic congestion on adjacent roads.

When excessive demand materialises on a road network with limited capacity, it results in congestion for all road users. This impacts on journey time reliability, delivery timeframes for goods and services and adds to driver frustration. There are also impacts on the environment through increased air and noise pollution.

Cities typically experience large demands on their transport systems, and an abundance of parking supply can create high competition for limited road space due to large numbers of drivers looking to park their vehicles. As can be seen at many out of town shopping centres, there is an intrinsic link between abundant parking provision and large private car demand. Yet in comparison with such out of town sites, cities offer more viable travel alternatives to the private car through public transport provision.

> "Cities typically experience large demands on their transport systems, and an abundance of parking supply can create high competition for limited road space due to large numbers of drivers looking to park their vehicles."

Careful consideration of parking supply within cities is needed in order to achieve an appropriate balance that meets demand yet does not encourage less sustainable travel, particularly for commuters. As city economies grow, working and resident populations both increase and this causes additional pressure on existing transport networks. In order to maintain the effectiveness and lifespan of a city's transportation system, people need to be able to make an informed choice on their method of transport to work/study, and ideally users should see mass transit systems such as bus or rail travel as their preferred choice from both a cost, convenience and travel time perspective.

As such, parking price within cities needs to be at a level sufficient to sustain the market yet also at a level that does not induce excessive demand, thereby undoing efforts to increase use of more sustainable transport modes. It also needs to be sufficiently competitive so that it does not disadvantage and price out certain users for whom sustainable modes are not currently a viable option. This balance can be difficult to achieve when the majority of the parking provision is in the hands of the private sector.

"…parking price within cities needs to be at a level sufficient to sustain the market yet also at a level that does not induce excessive demand, thereby undoing efforts to increase use of more sustainable transport modes."

A close link between land use and transport planning is essential. This means that new development is located in areas that have suitable means of access by a variety of transport modes and ensures prime development land in not inappropriately used by low quality surface-level car parking. As the transport impact of land uses are examined by the type of development being proposed and the proximity to the transport network, this reduces the adverse impacts of private car use and parking.

Many city buildings such as offices provide their own parking spaces, such as basement parking or lock-up car parks mainly for employee use. Such spaces are typically not publically available and are termed 'Private Non Residential' (PNR). Whilst this provides additional parking capacity within cities to accommodate the demand which is arising from development, the level of PNR parking needs to be carefully considered in order to avoid inadvertently maintaining car dependence and adding to traffic congestion. In city centre locations where public transport access is good, the need for large numbers of PNR spaces is questionable.

Parking space also needs to be provided for tourist coaches, preferably close to attractions so that passengers can be dropped off. Lack of coach parking space can cause tour operators to think twice before planning city excursions, however, it can be difficult for local authorities to find suitable parking locations within heavily built up city centres. Similarly, tourists and other visitors arriving by car can often be unaware of parking locations and a lack of signage and information can compound this issue.

All day parking, where a vehicle is continuously parked in the same spot, can take place in inappropriate locations. This includes commuters who park in mainly residential areas; preventing local residents from parking, adding to the cluttered feel of individual streets, decreasing perceived safety levels and reducing access for the likes of emergency service vehicles.

A high proportion of all day parking can also use up valuable space for people who need to park in the city for short durations such as for business meetings or for shopping. Typically this is more an issue with on-street rather than off-street parking spaces, but the result is that the turnover of high value spaces is low which means that people spend time circulating to find a space or are ultimately dissuaded from visiting an area altogether.

"A high proportion of all day parking can use up valuable space for people who need to park in the city for short durations such as for business meetings or for shopping."

The majority of parking acts require some sort of enforcement system to ensure effectiveness. Enforcement can assess whether parkers have stayed beyond the maximum time limit stipulated on the adjacent signage, or if they are parked on urban clearways or on double yellow lines, etc.

However it is virtually impossible to enforce all parking acts within any given city, and limited enforcement resources can only deal with a certain amount of parking infringements. City areas are generally split into those with parking restrictions and those where parking is unrestricted. Typically the areas with restrictions are city or local centres; however any restrictions are reliant on enforcement.

Aside from not abiding by parking regime rules, users have been known to abuse the system in other ways such as 'feeding the meter' which enables users to stay in the same space beyond the time limit stated. Similarly, misuse of Blue Badges (which is a nationwide problem) enables people without genuine disabilities to park on-street all day for free. The effects of this behaviour are reduced space turnover, impacts on traffic progression, circulating traffic looking for a parking space as well as annoyance to local residents and businesses.

Increasing volumes of cyclists are being seen throughout the UK and Ireland, with many cities also implementing bike hire schemes. In order to sustain this recent level of growth the overall offer to cyclists needs to be improved, and this includes provision such as dedicated cycle lanes and cycle parking. In the absence of suitable and secure parking, cyclists often have to lock their bikes to street furniture which adds to the feel of cluttered streets and leaves their bikes exposed to the elements.

"In order to sustain the recent level of growth in cycling, the overall offer to cyclists needs to be improved, and this includes provision such as dedicated cycle lanes and cycle parking."

This lack of good quality parking provision for cyclists can add to crime levels and perceived safety fears, which can also be apparent in low standard car parks. If such sites are located in areas of high vehicle or personal crime, are poorly lit and unsurfaced or unmanned and without CCTV, users feel unsafe and therefore park elsewhere. A lack of provision for disabled users and adults with children can also decrease car park attractiveness. Disabled or limited mobility users in particular are often dissuaded from paying for parking off-street when they can park for free on-street and closer to where they want to go to.

Taxis perform a vital public transport service within cities. They offer convenient door to door transport at all times of the day. To ensure this availability to customers, public hire taxis need sufficient on-street rank space to be able to wait and private hire taxis also need parking space while they await instruction on customer pick up.

Where the public hire rank space provided is not commensurate with taxi supply, overcrowding occurs and this can impact on the local area and impinge traffic flow. This detracts from the overall taxi offer, ultimately affecting the local economy.

2.3 Parking in Belfast

2.3.1 Parking Supply and Demand in the City Centre

The first consideration is how much parking supply and demand there currently is within Belfast. Within the city centre's Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ), which is divided into core and fringe sub-zones, there are approximately 28,300 publicly available parking spaces, split as 45% on-street and 55% off-street. These zones are shown in **Figure 1**.

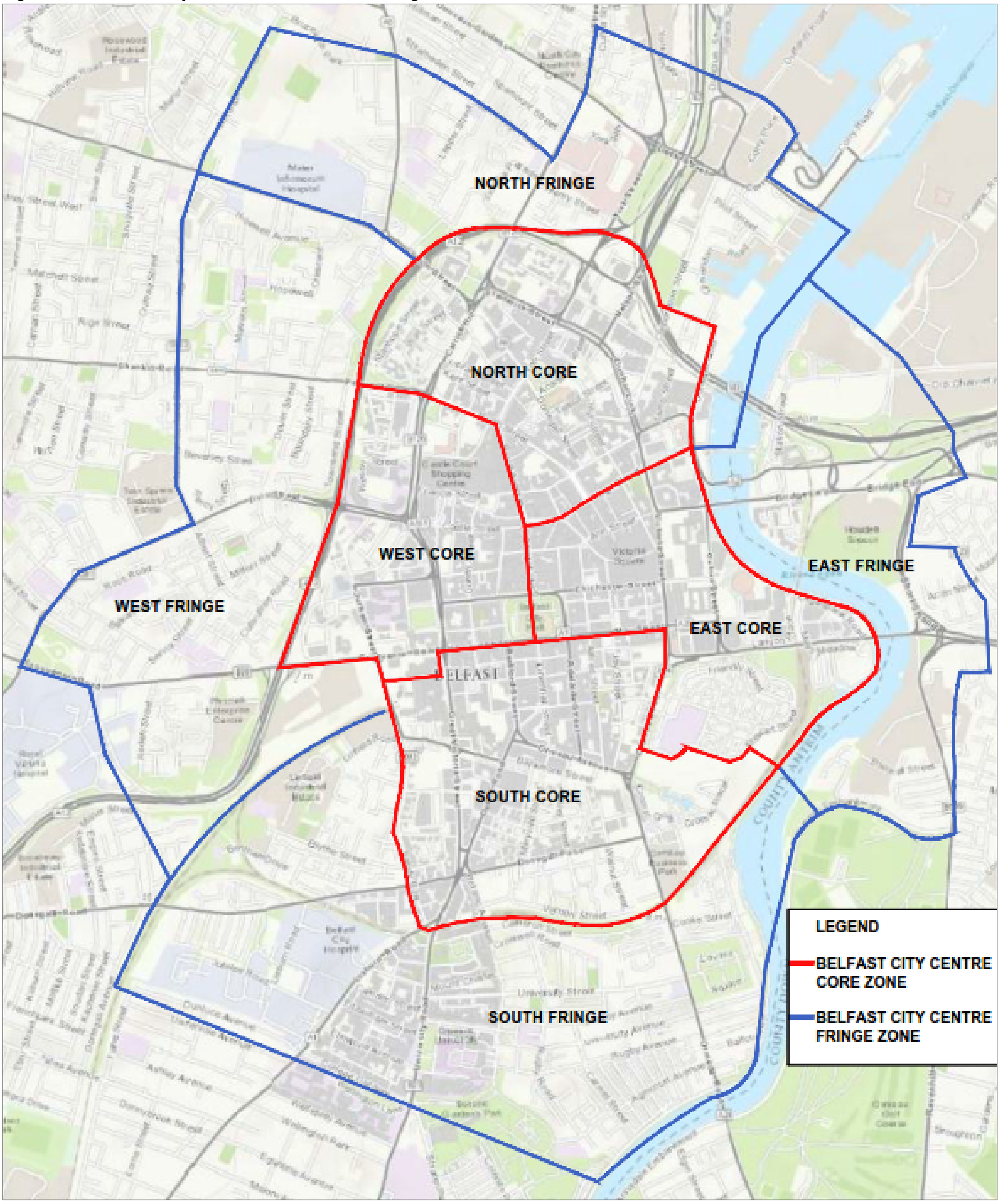
Within the core and fringe zones there are 12,800 spaces where on-street parking can take place, of which only 14% are currently 'controlled' i.e. have an enforced time limit or payment regime, predominantly located within the core zone. This means that there are 9,100 (80%) uncontrolled spaces located in fringe areas such as the lower Shankill and Crumlin Roads as well as Donegall Road and Lower Ormeau. There are also nearly 1,900 spaces within the core that remain uncontrolled.

There are a further 15,465 off-street spaces within the core and fringe provided in 58 car parks. The city council recently received responsibility for 1,476 of these off-street spaces within 17 car parks (two of which are free), with the remaining 13,989 being provided within 41 car parks predominantly provided by private sector operators.

Fourteen multi-storey car park (MSCP) sites provide around 58% of the total number of off-street spaces within the core and fringe, again predominantly provided by private sector parking operators although a small number are provided by public sector bodies.

The remaining 44 sites are small surface level car parks which typically provide fewer than 100 spaces each. The condition of some of these sites is low quality, with poor signposting on approach. It should be noted that some of these surface sites could be redeveloped; therefore the use of these sites for parking purposes could be seen to be on a temporary basis. If redeveloped, these sites could be put to more appropriate uses.

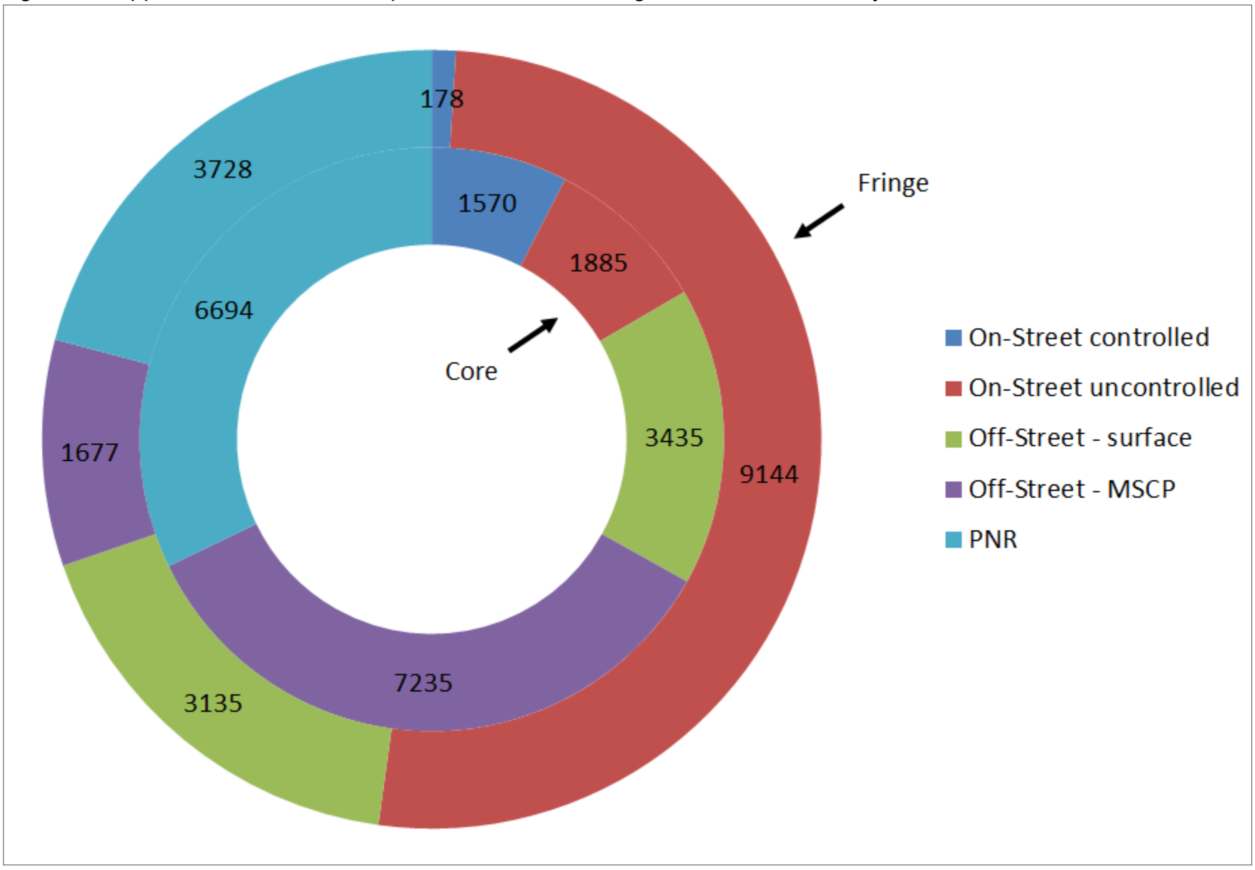
Figure 1 – Belfast City Centre Controlled Parking Zones



There are also a number of car park sites that are not generally publicly available but privately owned or contract operated. Often these are associated with businesses and offices and are termed as 'Private Non Residential' (PNR) spaces. Within Belfast city centre's core and fringe zones there are over 10,400 PNR spaces, split as around 6,700 within the core and 3,700 in the fringe.

This gives a total parking supply of 38,681 spaces within the city centre core and fringe. Note this excludes those provided at supermarkets and out of town shopping centres. The breakdown of spaces in the core and fringes respectively is shown in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2 – Approximate Number of Spaces in Core and Fringe Areas of Belfast City Centre



Day to day demand for off-street parking spaces typically uses up 50-60% of capacity at any one time, according to biennial surveys undertaken by DfI that have taken place over the last decade. On-street spaces typically have higher occupancies at between 70-80% on average, with around 90% of spaces in the core and 70% of spaces in the fringe being used. Demand also changes throughout the year, particularly in the run up to Christmas when demand is high.

According to the DfI surveys, the level of parking in the city centre has remained relatively constant over the last decade. This means there are around 18,000 parking acts within the city centre at any one time on a typical day. This equates to around 9,000 parking acts in each of the core and fringe areas, and this excludes PNR usage figures.

"According to DfI surveys, the level of parking in the city centre has remained relatively constant over the last decade. This means there are around 18,000 parking acts within the city centre at any one time on a typical day... and this excludes PNR usage figures."

It should be noted that the south fringe area shows the highest level of on-street parking of all of the areas considered (~4,000 acts at any one time). This includes areas around Queens University and City Hospital where no parking regime is currently in place. Within the core, the level of off-street parking is relatively equally spread out however the demand for on-street spaces in the south core area (which includes the likes of the Linen Quarter, Donegall Pass and Sandy Row) is double that of other core areas. This is considered to be due to the majority of city centre offices being located in this area and limited parking regime implementation.

Figures for the use of PNR spaces are not available; however anecdotal evidence would suggest reasonably high use of these spaces since many are provided by businesses and public sector bodies for employee use.

It is therefore apparent that with typical demand for around 18,000 spaces and a supply of 28,300, there is sufficient overall public parking supply within the city centre. Occupancy in core areas, which are largely subject to parking charges is around 65%, whereas in fringe areas where costs are significantly lower, occupancy is around 70%.

It is acknowledged that some car parks are full however others sit with lower occupancies. Also it means that there are areas of on-street provision completely saturated, largely as a result of the lack of any parking regime in those areas. It is therefore clear that the provision of parking is fragmented and imbalanced across the city centre.

"It is clear that the provision of parking is fragmented and imbalanced across the city centre."

In addition to the abundance of free parking opportunities on the edge of the city centre, the provision of PNR spaces provided is also considered to add to the attractiveness of driving into the city centre as these spaces are often offered to employees at no or modest cost. This also guarantees that people will always get a secure parking space upon arrival and therefore entrenches behaviour.

"In addition to the abundance of free parking opportunities on the edge of the edge of the city centre, the provision of PNR spaces provided is also considered to add to the attractiveness of driving into the city centre as these spaces are often offered to employees at no or modest cost."

The proportion of PNR spaces provided in Belfast is considered to be high in relation to other similar size cities; in Belfast there is one PNR space per 46 people, whereas in Cardiff it is one space per 50 people and in Newcastle-upon-Tyne it is one space per 70 people.

The number of spaces provided overall in Belfast is considered to be high compared to other cities of similar size. In Newcastle-upon-Tyne city centre there are around 9,500 off-street spaces provided, compared to 15,482 in Belfast. Provision in Cardiff is even lower, with an estimated 6,860 public parking spaces in the city centre.

This demand for parking affects the city centre in a number of ways. Most obviously it adds to traffic volumes and therefore congestion at key locations. This has impacts on noise and air pollution. Users often circulate in their vehicles looking to find a space. On-street spaces are highly valued yet it is more difficult to find a free space and users do not appear to be as familiar with nearby off-street alternatives.

It also means that some people park in unsuitable areas such as streets within city centre residential areas. Many of these streets, while sitting within the existing Controlled Parking Zone, do not have any time limits or parking regime. Despite there being parking capacity in dedicated sites nearby, commuters can park all day for free, just a short walk from the city centre. Consultation feedback and observations have shown that these areas fill up very early in the morning with commuter parking.

Belfast also experiences the typical parking enforcement issues whereby some parkers stay beyond their time limits, do not pay for parking when they should or feed the meter. This means that some on-street spaces are used for longer than they should be which reduces parking opportunity for others and ultimately could have an impact on the viability of the local economy.

Blue Badge holders are able to park for free on-street and there is evidence to suggest that this is a common practice in the city centre and it means users can often park much closer to their destination. Since Blue Badge holders also have to pay to use off-street car parks, there is currently little incentive for them to use them.

2.3.2 Parking Duration in the City Centre

The volumes of people parking in the city centre suggest a significant proportion of long stay, all day parking. This is mainly associated with work related trips which normally arrive early morning and then leave in the evening.

The current on-street parking regime is designed to prohibit all day parking by limiting stays to one, two or up to four hours, depending on location, for any one parking act. This aims to maintain space turnover which increases parking opportunities within the core of the city centre.

High quality off-street sites are better suited to all day parking, particularly those located outside of the central area, with multi-storeys offering the most efficient use of space in this regard. Recent surveys of the City Council's surface car parks have shown that nearly 90% of the total number of spaces are occupied at around midday, which appears the busiest time of day for parking at these sites. The surveys have also shown that some sites have very high turnover whilst others have low turnover and therefore a high proportion of all day parkers.

However there is no clear pattern apparent between the distance from the centre of the city (i.e. City Hall) and the proportion of all day parkers. An efficient system would have a lower proportion of all day parkers the closer towards the city core. This appears to be the case for car parks located on the edge of the city centre such as Corporation Street and Corporation Square where up to half of parkers park all day, however car park sites that are much closer to City Hall such as Cromac Street and Charlotte Street show up to 30% all day parking (i.e. around one in four spaces at these car parks are used all day, reducing availability for short stay parkers). Other sites nearby such as Hope Street North and Bankmore Street have less than 5% all day parkers, however all four sites are a similar distance from City Hall.

"There is no clear pattern apparent between the distance from the centre of the city (i.e. City Hall) and the proportion of all day parkers. An efficient system would have a lower proportion of all day parkers the closer towards the city core."

It would appear that the convenience and modest cost of parking at the likes of Cromac Street and Charlotte Street all day is the reason for this behaviour. Tariffs therefore need to be re-examined to ensure that all day parking takes place in appropriate locations. This is particularly important as the Cromac Street and Charlotte Street sites are located within an Air Quality Management Area.

A number of privately operated car parks also operate contract and season ticket parking. This means that a proportion of the overall spaces within a car park are set aside for this purpose, however for some of these sites the number of contract/season tickets offered is in excess of that stated within planning conditions.

2.3.3 Facilities & Payment

A review of each of the individual car parks has shown significant differences in terms of quality; for example only around one in five car parks have provision for parents and children, with less than half providing dedicated spaces for disabled users.

Some car parks are completely unmanned and have no CCTV. In certain areas of the city centre there are high instances of vehicle crime and this inevitably has an impact on parking behaviour.

This means that car parks located within some areas of the city centre are not attractive to use and may be a reason for lower occupancies in these areas. At the other end of the scale, a number of the large city centre multi-storey car parks have achieved the 'Park Mark' standard, which is a scheme aimed at reducing crime and the fear of crime in parking facilities by encouraging car park operators to raise standards.

"Only around one in five car parks have provision for parents and children, with less than half providing dedicated spaces for disabled users."

Current payment technologies for parking in Belfast include cash, credit/debit card, pay by phone, web and smartphone ‘app’. Traditional cash pay and display machines are also provided on-street and off-street, however more modern systems are now available which could be further investigated.

Use of the ‘parkmobile’ service, which can currently be used at all DfI on-street and BCC off-street sites, has shown an increase in popularity recently and this is considered to be associated with the ease of use and payment that it provides. Ease of payment assists operations and maximises usage and revenue for providers. Some city centre residents and businesses also rent out their parking spaces to commuters via websites, often at attractive rates.

> “Use of the ‘parkmobile’ service, which can currently be used at all DfI on-street and BCC off-street sites, has shown an increase in popularity recently and this is considered to be associated with the ease of use and payment that it provides”

The average cost of parking across the city centre is largely commensurate with cities of similar size or characteristics such as Newcastle, Middlesbrough and Nottingham; however Dublin, Manchester and Cardiff all have higher parking costs. For the Council’s car parks, which were recently inherited from DfI, tariffs have remain largely unchanged for a number of years and there does not appear to be a strategic approach to the pricing of each car park.

2.3.4 Parking information

Belfast does not currently benefit from an integrated city-wide parking signage system. While there are some localised areas that provide modern electronic signage upon approach to car parks such as Victoria Square and Titanic Quarter, fixed plate signage is used in most locations to advise users of parking locations as they approach them.

> “Belfast does not currently benefit from an integrated city-wide parking signage system… There is an absence of information for users as they approach the city from further afield.”

There is an absence of information for users as they approach the city from further afield; therefore those who are unfamiliar have to rely on signage information which is located just a few metres from individual car parks. This results in people circulating the city centre looking for parking spots.

Integrated parking guidance and information systems monitor individual parking locations electronically. Data is then fed through to a communication system which advises motorists of the availability and location of parking via a network of variable message signs. Allowing the public to access this parking information before they start their journey can help them make a more informed decision and also influence their modal choice.

This could result in better management of demand and supply, potentially reducing environmental impacts through lower vehicle emissions. It would also raise the overall attractiveness of the city, leading to improved revenue generation, better utilisation of off-street car parks and improved accessibility to short stay on-street parking areas.

2.3.5 Coaches / Tourism

The tourism industry and in particular the coach tourism industry is vital to both sustaining and growth of the Northern Ireland economy. Local coach operators invest millions in vehicles and bring much needed revenue both in terms of what they spend and the numbers of tourists brought into the country.

> “There is a need for off-street coach parking facilities and convenient signage for coaches and passengers, so that visitors keep coming back and attract further visitors.”

There is provision for 19 coach parking bays in the city. While these are essential to have for short term city centre parking particularly for day time parking, demand regularly exceeds supply. There are a lack of facilities in Belfast and also a perceived lack of enforcement of the existing facilities. Furthermore, there is a need for off-street coach parking facilities and convenient signage for coaches and passengers, so that visitors keep coming back and attract further visitors.

2.3.6 Cyclists

DfI data has revealed that there are over 700 cycle parking locations in Belfast city centre. However with the increase in the popularity of cycling both from users using their own bikes and the recently implemented Belfast Bikes hire scheme, there is a need to enhance the quality and volume of cycle parking.

This should ideally include weather-protected and secure cycle parking in the locations where people want to park their bikes, and the implementation of additional Belfast Bikes docking stations at key attractors such as transport hubs, shopping centres and centres of employment.

2.3.7 Taxis

Public hire taxis in Belfast benefit from a number of ranks from where they can pick up customers. However it has been acknowledged that there is significant competition for kerb space across the city centre and that ranks need to be better distributed across the city centre so that they more closely align with footfall in particular areas.

There are particular areas where localised issues occur due to taxi supply being in excess of the rank space provided. This pressure is likely to increase with the introduction of single tier licensing whereby private hire taxis will also be able to use ranks.

2.3.8 Outside of the city centre

The Council also provides a further 720 spaces in 14 car parks outside of the city centre. Ten of these car parks are located in east Belfast and four are located in south Belfast. The East Belfast sites are primarily located off the Newtownards Road.

Recent surveys have shown that the average weekday occupancy of these 14 sites is 78%, with six sites having occupancies of 90% – 100%. Only two of the 14 sites have a form of charging.

Surveys have also shown that between 30% – 80% of people parked for more than four hours at eleven of the sites. Therefore nearly all of these free sites are showing high levels of all day parking and this may be due to people parking due to their involvement in local activities but it may also include people parking before catching the bus into the city centre.

> “Nearly all of the free sites are showing high levels of all day parking and this may be due to people parking due to their involvement in local activities but it may also include people parking before catching the bus into the city centre.”

Many of these car parks are located adjacent to key arterial routes. The all-day parking that occurs at these sites has impacts on adjacent shops and businesses by reducing opportunities for customers to park. It is clear that the lack of charging at these sites encourages longer duration parking, which reduces space turnover and availability.

2.3.9 Residents Parking

There are some areas within the Controlled Parking Zone such as The Markets, Sandy Row etc where the level of driveway parking provision is not generally commensurate with car ownership levels in these areas. The lack of an on-street regime encourages commuters to park in these predominantly residential areas.

The impacts on residential communities also extend further out of the city centre. Areas such as the Lower Malone, Stranmillis and College Park Avenue / Rugby Road also experience issues from people who work and therefore park in the area but who do not live locally, as well students utilising the surrounding education institutions. This results in excessive parking demand throughout the day.

Compared to the city centre residential areas these outer areas only generally benefit from historic on-street parking provision.

> “Areas such as the Lower Malone, Stranmillis and College Park Avenue / Rugby Road also experience issues from people who work and therefore park in the area but who do not live locally, as well students who live in the area but in dwellings that have multiple occupants. This results in excessive parking demand throughout the day.”

This means that when space is occupied by workers or students, local residents find it difficult to park outside or near to their houses. Parking is also at a premium for local businesses in these areas. There is also reason to believe that commuters are travelling into these areas from further afield and then getting the bus or walking into the city centre.

These largely residential areas, in addition to those within the city centre, have been subject to consideration for Residents Parking Schemes in the recent past. Residents Parking Schemes assign on-street spaces to residents and local businesses by way of a permit, thereby preventing use of the space by non-residents and businesses outside the area.

However, none of the Belfast schemes have been implemented to date. It is considered that in the absence of such schemes, these issues will remain and there is reason to believe that as the city grows the problem will intensify and expand to other areas.

2.3.10 Park and Ride

Parking on or adjacent to the major radial routes into the city centre has received attention in part due to the implementation of the Quality Bus Corridors. On-street parking provision on the likes of the Ormeau Road and Newtownards Road is enforced by the use of Urban Clearways and bus lane operation restrictions during peak periods.

> "…careful consideration of the comparative costs for users is required. This could be addressed in a number of ways... for example it could provide improved bus journey times through implementation of further priority measures, or if city centre parking is made less cost attractive this could attract users over to Park & Ride."

A large number of Park & Ride sites have been implemented in the last decade by Translink and DfI. These provide parking nodes for users to avail of bus and rail services into the city centre and include sites at Dundonald, Cairnshill and Sprucefield. Parking is free and users only pay for the cost of travel, thereby removing car traffic from radial routes and the city centre.

However there are some disparities between the cost of onward public transport travel from these sites and the cost of city centre parking. If it is possible to park in the city centre for less than it would cost to take a bus from a Park & Ride site, users will be unlikely to make the switch. For example, users who currently make use of free on-street parking in city centre residential areas such as the Markets or who benefit from a cheap city centre PNR space or would, in either instance, be highly unlikely to start using Park & Ride.

Whilst DfI has developed a Park & Ride Strategy for the city, careful consideration of the comparative costs for users is required. This could be addressed in a number of ways rather than just making public transport fares cheaper; for example it could provide improved bus journey times through implementation of further priority measures, or if city centre parking is made less cost attractive this could attract users over to Park & Ride.

Similarly, some radial routes into the city centre such as Castlereagh Road do not benefit from significant Park & Ride provision, yet this could influence the proportion of car journeys made along this corridor.

2.3.11 Policy

Key relevant policy documents which have shaped, and will continue to shape transport, parking and planning policy include the following:

- Regional Development Strategy 2035;
- Regional Transportation Strategy 2002-2012;
- Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015;
- Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan 2015;
- Belfast City Council Transport Policy;
- DOE Parking Standards;
- Belfast Air Quality Action Plan 2015 – 2020;
- Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland; and
- Planning Policy Statements (PPS3 and PPS13).

These policies, which the strategy aims to support, are typical of those implemented in many other UK and Ireland cities, and in relation to

> "[Current] policies are typical of those implemented in many other UK and Ireland cities, and in relation to parking they are generally in accord and include concepts such as managing demand, reducing supply of all day parking, having parking controls and areas of restraint, and influencing parking behaviour."

parking they are generally in accord and include concepts such as managing demand, reducing supply of all day parking, having parking controls and areas of restraint, and influencing parking behaviour.

Specific actions include reducing the supply and increasing the cost of commuter and long stay parking in Belfast city centre; reducing the reliance on the private car; introducing strategic Park & Ride sites at key locations; restraining the level of (PNR) parking provided for new city developments; introducing residents only parking schemes; cycle parking.

Of particular note is the Air Quality Action Plan which sets out measures to be implemented throughout Belfast to attain compliance of the nitrogen dioxide EU limit under a clear timetable. As such Belfast City Council identified four Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) namely:

- M1 Westlink;
- Cromac St & Albertbridge Rd;
- Upper Newtownards Rd; and
- Ormeau Road.

As such it is noted that a number of car parks are located within or adjacent to these four areas. As traffic volumes and congestion have a direct bearing on air quality, the role that these car parks have on these individual areas should be of significant concern.

The Parking Standards applied to new developments also have a significant bearing on the level of parking provided. Whilst on the whole the current policy is similar to that employed in many other UK and Ireland cities, the standards applied within areas of parking restraint are generic and not specific to the development type. This means that in some instances the level of parking required in the standards is not actually suitable for the development being planned. Therefore adding greater clarity to the parking standards could result in more appropriate levels of parking associated with new developments.

3 Key Issues and Challenges

3.1 Key Issues

The baseline review has indicated that there is sufficient parking stock in Belfast and this should be maintained and closely monitored. There are 28,300 spaces publicly available (45% on street and 55% off street) and demand indicates a requirement for 18,000 on average per day in Belfast. The Council has responsibility for 17 of the 59 off street car parks containing 1,476 parking spaces. The number of car parking spaces provided in Belfast is considered to be high compared to other cities of similar size.

Whilst there is currently sufficient parking stock in terms of overall spaces the provision is fragmented and imbalanced across the city centre. The current location of car parking spaces, particularly surface car parking, is not necessarily aligned to either existing nodes of demand or to future redevelopment proposals, particularly in the context of the City Centre Regeneration Strategy. The provision and location of parking should reflect the changing shape of regeneration across the city.

There is a high level of all day commuter parking in specific areas of the core city centre area that is inappropriate. This reduces the amount of short stay opportunities for shoppers, business meetings and other visitors.

There is a high level of private non-residential parking (10,422 spaces) provided in the core and fringe city area which encourages the use of the private car as the mode of transport. This is generally free car parking provided to employees as part of public and private office developments.

The review has found that parking tariffs in Belfast are comparable with cities such as Newcastle and Nottingham, but generally cheaper than cities such as Manchester, Dublin and Cardiff. Council site tariffs were found to be generally lower than those in adjacent private sites.

There is a lack of information for visitors as to where available parking is located resulting in circulating traffic looking for available spaces contributing to congestion in the city which could be more efficiently managed. Site audits have identified that some car parks are of low quality in terms of facilities and provision for users which leads to security and crime issues impacting on parking behaviour in the city.

Commuter parking in city centre residential areas is a known issue and individual Residents Parking Schemes have been developed by DFI, however to date none of these schemes have been implemented.

There are a number of low quality surface car parking sites in the city centre where consideration should be given to maximising their wider regeneration potential particularly in the context of the City Centre Regeneration Strategy and redevelopment proposals. Consolidation of existing parking or alternative provision could potentially be facilitated as part of any new development or consideration given to the provision of new multi storey/underground car parks. This would allow better use of valuable city centre land and bring wider economic and regeneration benefits, as well concentrating traffic movements to fewer parking sites.

Parking is not seen as a major decision factor by investors, particularly as other cities do not have significant city centre parking although it was noted that many other cities have a range of alternative sustainable transport options.

Potential solutions that could be implemented through the introduction of new technology include more efficient enforcement, development of a Belfast parking website and app, improving parking information as you approach the city (city wide Intelligent Transport System, innovative wayfinding and upgrading payment methods).

Accessible parking in Belfast City Centre is limited in comparison to the number of standard spaces available. Blue badge holders can park for free on street if the blue badge is on clear display. A review of the existing provision of accessible parking has indicated that Blue Badge provision could also be considered within Belfast City Council off street car parks.

Issues of parking in some district centres outside the city centre has been raised in particular the use of free car parks for all day commuter parking in areas such as East Belfast.

The progression and promotion of sustainable travel options should also be considered in parallel including further Park and Ride facilities on both radial and high frequency public transport corridors; enhancement of the quality and volume of cycle infrastructure and parking; improved taxi facilities and coach parking and the development of the Belfast Transport Hub and the Belfast Rapid Transit system. Belfast has recently had success in relation to cycling with the introduction of Belfast Bikes aiming to provide low cost and accessible travel throughout the City. Usage is increasing and additional docking station locations are currently being developed, however improved parking opportunities and knowledge of their location hinders usage throughout the City.

There is an immediate need to look at setting up a city centre coach park. It is one of the key elements of the city's tourism infrastructure that is missing and would fit very well within BCC's current city regeneration plans.

Although positive steps have been taken to address the environmental issues caused by vehicle traffic in the City, some areas still experience issues. The Council currently has four Air Quality Management Areas and has noted reductions in some pollutants, however parking activity in these areas may be contributing to the issues.

3.2 Challenges and Opportunities

Major Masterplans, regeneration projects, highways schemes, planning applications and development proposals have been considered in terms of loss/gain of parking provision within the city. Despite possible forthcoming losses of parking provision (i.e. over 1,000 spaces overall across the city), these projects will add to the overall attractiveness of the city. They will also change the use of some current surface parking sites to more appropriate uses.

Development proposals do include additional parking, largely in the form of multi-storeys which will be publically available (i.e. around 2,000 spaces), however it should be noted that this will primarily accommodate the additional traffic generated by these developments.

In particular it is anticipated that there will be a net loss of provision in the north of the city centre due to a number of development and transport scheme proposals in that area. These will result in the loss of around 850 existing spaces however this could be compensated to some extent by provision of around 1,390 spaces, although these will primarily serve development. Ulster University is relocating to the northern side of the city centre which will cause an influx of students to the city therefore consideration should be given to the impact on parking and public transport. The opportunity exists to influence travel behaviour at the onset, away from private car use and parking via further investment and upgrade to existing public transport facilities in that area.

It has also been identified that electric vehicle (EV) use is increasing in Northern Ireland and additional charging points could assist in wider EV uptake, with associated air quality benefits arising as a result.

The need for Residents Parking Schemes is evident however their delivery has stalled. While there are still intentions to implement these schemes, it is clear that a revised approach is needed in order to gain stakeholder support. This needs to consider a number of factors and leadership is required on all sides.

The upgrade of Great Victoria Street Station as part of the £120m Belfast Transport Hub proposals will provide additional services for both bus and rail travel in the city, making the use of other modes to travel more attractive and therefore encouraging the use of more sustainable transport modes other than the private car.

The implementation of the £98.5m Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) system, which is a new bus-based public transport service will help to address the current and future transport needs in Belfast and support sustainable economic growth and regeneration. BRT will provide a modern, safe, efficient and high quality service which will encourage people to travel by public transport. It will help to integrate communities and link people to jobs, shops, leisure, health and education services.

The BRT network will initially include three rapid transit routes, which will link East Belfast, West Belfast and Titanic Quarter via the city centre. Construction of the BRT infrastructure commenced in 2014 and should be complete by 2018.

DfI recently published their Bicycle Strategy which seeks to transform cycling in Northern Ireland over the next 25 years. Its three pillar approach seeks to build a comprehensive bicycle network, support people who choose to cycle and promote the bicycle as a mode of transport for every day journeys. An integral element of the delivery of the bicycle network is cycle parking, and surveys have shown that public awareness of bike routes and parking is currently low, particularly amongst local residents. The opportunity therefore exists to assist with delivery of this key element of the Bicycle Strategy and increase cycling levels amongst the resident population.

4 Objectives

4.1 Vision

Our vision for this strategy is as follows:

> **"Belfast is a city offering sufficient, high quality and appropriately located parking which supports economic development and regeneration within the city by balancing the requirements of residents, businesses, commuters and visitors."**

To enable this to happen, a number of objectives have been developed that the strategy should meet. These are based on the wider aspirations and goals of Belfast City Council and also follow the analysis of the issues and challenges identified and discussed in the previous two chapters.

4.2 Objective 1

Ensuring appropriate provision and location of car parking to support and improve the economic vitality of the City Centre and district centres

The appropriate level of parking within the city has a crucial part to play in its economic vitality. However, an overabundance of parking will add to the current traffic congestion problems, which will detract from the attractiveness of the city from an investment perspective as well as being detrimental to the urban environment.

The location of parking also has a crucial part to play. One large multi-storey parking site performing the same function of four or five small surface sites is a better use of valuable city centre land and more efficient in terms of traffic movements and it also frees up those surface sites for regeneration and development.

Council priorities

- Review current provision to ensure an appropriate provision in the right location to support economic vitality.
- Consider how optimal use can be made of surface car parks to best support city centre regeneration in terms of alignment of provision with re-development and maximising valuable city centre land to deliver on wider regeneration outcomes.
- Identify opportunities to consolidate existing parking or alternative provision as an integral part of new development and consider provision of new multi storey /underground car parks where appropriate. Adjacent local communities will be consulted on location and design.

4.3 Objective 2

Ensuring car parking provision encourages sustainable commuter travel, especially for journeys into the City Centre and supports access by public transport, cycling and walking

Parking availability, cost and ease of use have a direct impact on people's choice of mode of transport and therefore there is potential to cause traffic congestion and to undermine the viability of sustainable transport options. The level of parking provision is therefore a key demand management tool, as managing the amount of parking provides a form of restraint that can help to limit traffic levels and also strongly influence modal shift.

Council priorities

- Work with stakeholders to consider how parking tariffs in the city centre core can be reviewed to ensure sufficient short-stay parking facilities to support commercial and leisure activities and deter long stay commuter parking.
- Work with stakeholders to develop and improve the sustainable transport modes for travel to and within the city, in particular to deter all day commuter parking.

4.4 Objective 3

Minimising the potentially negative impacts of parking on residential communities in the city particularly in inner city areas

Commuters use inner city residential areas in Belfast to park in order to avail of effectively free parking facilities within walking distance of a workplace. This has negative effects on residential communities in terms of accessibility to residents' homes, area safety and access for services e.g. ambulances. These latter schemes have been investigated throughout the city but none have been implemented to date. A review of criteria for implementation, scheme design, operational times and community support should be considered in order to increase the potential for delivery.

Council priorities

- Work with DfI and local communities to consider parking management for these areas, either through the implementation of on-street parking regimes or Residents Parking Schemes.
- Identify surface car park sites suitable for consolidation and redevelopment in order to improve the built environment for inner city areas.

4.5 Objective 4

Work with stakeholders to improve the quality of parking and information available, ideally through technology and in particular develop a new parking signage and information system that supports parking and wider applications

The provision of high quality and safe car parks is an important element as it is often the first impression for visitors to the city. Better provision in terms of parking information and quality should be sought and importantly the need to ensure parking is sufficiently attractive to those with limited mobility or with families.

Council priorities

- Bring forward technological solutions to make it easier to navigate and park in the City Centre.
- Work with key stakeholders to ensure that key destinations have appropriate levels of disabled parking and family friendly provision.
- Encourage car park operators to invest in their facilities to the extent that they will achieve the Park Mark standard.
- Reduce supply of poor quality surface level space and replace with higher quality well-managed space.

4.6 Complementary Objectives

There are also a further three complementary objectives:

C1. Promote sustainable commuter travel, especially for journeys into the City Centre and support access by public transport, cycling and walking

C2. Identify opportunities to provide secure bicycle and coach parking in appropriate city centre locations

C3. Ensuring appropriate provision for taxis within the city centre

5 The Strategy

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a high level overview of the key features of the strategy that are priorities for the Council. Specific actions are then detailed in Chapter 6, including those associated with the complementary objectives.

5.2 Parking Provision

Parking provision has a significant impact on economic vitality and should also not encourage less sustainable commuter travel. The strategy addresses three broad areas in relation to parking provision within the city:

i. **Parking Supply:**

   a. The current level of city centre parking supply will be maintained in order to provide opportunities for short stay parking, however demand will be regularly monitored.

   b. All on-street parking in the city centre core should become restricted.

   c. City centre surface parking sites should be redeveloped for other uses and parking acts migrated into multi-storey sites located alongside the Inner Ring.

   d. New car parks within the city will only be provided where they replace existing spaces or where they are an essential part of new development proposals.

   e. Parking standards for new development across the city should not encourage car commuting and the associated overspill onto neighbouring streets.

   f. The amount of private non-residential (PNR) parking provided across the city will be more tightly controlled in order to influence traffic demand in the city centre

   g. Parking initiatives to promote the evening economy and provision to cater for overnight/weekend visitors to hotels.

ii. **Parking Location:**

   a. Long stay parking should only occur in off-street sites away from central areas of the city centre, on the edge of the Inner Ring.

   b. Central areas should only be used for short stay parking.

   c. On-street parking should only be used for short stay parking and for those with Blue Badges.

iii. **Parking Price:**

   a. Tariffs for on and off-street parking should be reviewed, including consideration of variable pricing.

   b. Pricing should reflect the desirability of central areas.

   c. Long stay parking in suburban areas should be charged in order to increase turnover and maintain space for local activities.

   d. Pricing should encourage space turnover in desirable areas.

   e. Parking cost should be comparable with other transport options such as public transport.

5.3 Residential Communities

The need to support the city's residential communities through parking interventions is also an important objective. As part of the strategy, a review of criteria for implementation, scheme design, operational times and community support should be considered in order to increase the potential for delivery.

The Council will work with the relevant agencies and stakeholders to facilitate the implementation of residents parking schemes within applicable areas of the city centre.

5.4 Parking Information and Quality

In order to improve the quality of parking and information available, the strategy will address the following:

- Investigate options for utilising technology to improve ticketing and payment systems.
- Provide more information for visitors via electronic media including a dedicated website and app.
- Assess the feasibility of an integrated signage system for the city centre and wayfinding for individual areas.
- Look to integrate parking payment and management technologies with information systems within a single comprehensive city wide system.
- Raise the standard of parking facilities, including those with families or limited mobility.
- Encourage car park operators to invest in their facilities to so that they can achieve the Park Mark standard.

6 Strategy Actions

This chapter identifies specific actions and measures that will underpin the strategy and support each of the objectives. The actions are those that are priorities for Belfast City Council, although some of the actions themselves rely on delivery by and cooperation from other stakeholders. A further set of complementary measures are identified in section 6.4, and these are to be considered by other stakeholders.

6.1 Parking Provision

6.1.1 On-Street

In terms of on-street spaces, within the city centre core, there are still a number of locations where un-controlled parking remains (in fact there are still more uncontrolled than controlled spaces). While responsibility for on-street parking still lies with DfI, the Council will work with this organisation to seek to achieve delivery of the following actions.

All on-street parking spaces within the core should become controlled, either through the implementation of parking regimes or residents parking schemes. This will help to remove the bulk of all day parking from these areas and open up space for short term parking. It will also help to rebalance demand across the city centre.

Within the city centre fringe, parking studies should be undertaken to assess whether a form of parking restriction is required in each of the four sub-zones.

Furthermore, tariffs for on-street parking could be examined at a more strategic level. It is apparent that parking costs within Belfast are competitive compared to other similar sized cities, and the premium nature of on-street spaces should be reflected in the cost.

For example, charges could be based on the distance from City Hall, with an increasing cost based on proximity. This would ensure that turnover of the most valuable spaces would increase and the increased costs would deter users who might want to feed the meter.

It is apparent that there is particularly high demand for charged on-street spaces in the south core area (Linenhall Quarter). Consideration of tariffs in this key business district should be heavily biased towards short stay parking in order to free up spaces for others.

Variable pricing should also be examined in order to influence parking demand at key times of the day or year. Similarly the operational hours of on-street spaces should be reviewed with a view to achieving a better match with demand. For example this could mean lowering tariffs during late afternoon hours in order to stimulate the evening economy (most on-street and BCC sites are free after 6pm anyway).

The ticketing and payment systems should be reviewed to assess whether further investments could improve revenue raising. This would be in addition to the current provision delivered via ‘parkmobile’ for DfI on-street and BCC off-street sites.

For example, a cashless and ticketless payment system could result in improved revenue taking and reduced waste. Users would purchase their parking act via phone or mobile app and provide their location and vehicle registration number. This could facilitate more targeted enforcement by enabling officers to only target those vehicles with registration numbers that the system was telling them had overstayed their time limits.

Similarly, parking bay monitors are a more efficient way of managing high demand spaces. They detect when a vehicle is parked in an individual bay and can alert the parking provider when the parking act has extended beyond its time limit. This means that instances of ‘feeding the meter’ can be reduced and it also means the enforcement can be more targeted. As such, **DfI should consider a pilot of parking bay monitoring for the areas of highest on-street demand i.e. Linen Quarter** as this is the type of area that is most likely to justify any such investment.

Free on-street parking for Blue Badge holders should remain. As such, these should be the only ‘long stay’ parkers parking on-street. Providing free parking for blue badge holders in off-street car parks is discussed in the next section.

The actions are listed in Table 1.

Table 1 – On-Street Actions

No.	On-Street Action	Meets Objective(s)
1	**Extend controlled on-street parking spaces within the core. DfI to undertake parking studies within the city centre fringe in consultation with the council.**	**1 2 3**
2	**Tariffs for on-street parking to be examined at a more strategic level**	**1**
3	**Variable pricing to be examined**	**1**
4	**Review of ticketing and payment systems**	**1 4**
5	**DfI to consider a pilot of on-street bay monitoring**	**1 4**
6	**Free on-street parking for Blue Badge holders to remain**	**1**
7.	**Improved enforcement to reduce inappropriate parking such as pavement parking**	**1 3**

6.1.2 Off-Street – Public Parking

It is evident from parking surveys over the last few years that, while some individual car parks operate at capacity, there is ample spare capacity in the overall provision.

More recent surveys have indicated a slight increase in parking demand in the last couple of years, and this may continue however the historic trend has been flat. It is apparent that there are key areas where charged on-street demand is high and at capacity. On-street users who are parking for significant durations need to be encouraged, where possible, to move to off-street sites in order to free up capacity.

Future proposals also need to be factored in. These include the impacts of the closure of some car parks due to development, transport schemes and regeneration initiatives. The extension of charged on-street parking areas within the CPZ in tandem with the implementation of Residents Parking Schemes in the city centre core, fringe and also in areas of South Belfast could result in commuters relocating their parking acts into the city centre.

Whilst the opportunity is evident for these users to switch to more sustainable transport, Northern Ireland has traditionally been highly car dependent and the increasing proportion of jobs that Belfast offers in relation to the rest of the country may see an increase in parking demand. Other localised factors such as the relocation of Ulster University to the north of the city centre need to be factored in. A seemingly high proportion of local university students nowadays live at home while studying and therefore have to travel to campus on a daily basis.

As such it is proposed that the current parking stock is maintained, although with demand levels regularly monitored. As the development market continues to improve, individual surface sites (in both private and public ownership) may become available for development, and these will be considered on a case by case basis to determine the impact on the overall parking stock.

It is clear that the overall parking experience needs to improve for users. Four out of five car parks in Belfast are surface car parks which offer very limited capacity and a lower quality experience than multi-storey car parks (MSCPs). In comparison with many other cities, the majority of Belfast’s current MSCPs are modern. They also represent a good use of city centre space in terms of the number of spaces they provide for their area.

There should therefore be a shift away from surface car parking into multi-storeys. There are currently 14 MSCPs in the city centre compared to 45 surface sites. The vast majority of these surface sites, irrespective of individual ownership, represent development opportunities. Most of the MSCPs are already located on or near to the Inner Ring; however there are some gaps in provision in certain areas such as the north of the city at North St and Donegall St; in the south-east at Cromac St and Ormeau Rd. These areas already experience parking demand or will soon experience more of it due to forthcoming development. There are already plans in the pipeline for additional MSCPs in certain locations, however these will be constructed to accommodate a mix of development and non-development associated parking.

It is therefore recommended that additional MSCPs are provided to complete the ‘ring’ of sites around the Inner Ring. **These should only be provided when a number of adjacent surface sites are closed.** It is evident that large additional capacity is not needed from a demand perspective, therefore providing additional MSCPs is for strategic rather than demand based reasoning. This will ‘mop up’ these individual areas and concentrate traffic movements to fewer parking sites. It will also free up these surface sites for development. Parkers using these MSCPs will be able to make the short walk or cycle into the city core.

The individual BCC car parks should be gradually ‘migrated’ to these MSCPs as opportunities arise, however the Council should seek to maintain a level of influence in the patterns of usage at these MSCPs.

MSCPs located on the main radial routes will catch traffic before it enters the city core, after which users can walk or hire a bicycle through to their destination. This reinforces the area within the Inner Ring as being considered to be the ‘walking zone’. As this understanding develops, perceptions will change and there will be gradual acceptance that the core is primarily for people rather than for parking.

The selection of individual MSCP locations will require careful consideration in order to avoid any detrimental impacts on air quality within the vicinity and impact on the local residents areas. However, advocating that surface car parks are eventually rationalised into MSCPs should result in reduced traffic volumes from fewer circulating vehicles. This will have benefits of reducing air pollution and improving road safety, particularly in those areas that are within AQMAs.

Furthermore the freeing up of city centre space for other use offers the potential to further ‘green’ the city and make it more liveable and walkable. The removal of unsightly swathes of surface parking will improve the feel of individual areas and encourage activity, permeability and footfall.

To add to the overall quality of the parking offer and thereby increase the willingness of users to pay, **BCC should encourage car park operators to invest in their facilities to the extent that they will achieve the Park Mark standard**. This will include examining how car parks can be improved to reduce crime and the fear of crime, and should also consider how provision can be improved for disabled users and parents with children. This will include increasing the number of dedicated spaces set aside for disabled users and families.

As a minimum, this will be expected to be achieved for all 14 MSCPs in order to enhance attractiveness. Given the gradual shift away from surface car park use to MSCP sites, operators should be able to see the value in such investment.

It is acknowledged that migrating parking out towards the Inner Ring would result in greater walk distances to key shopping and employment areas. While the intention is that this would provide health benefits for car park patrons, it is acknowledged that some users may have more limited mobility such as parents with young children. To address this, **an Inner Ring Shuttle Bus could be considered with Translink which would connect all of the Inner Ring MSCPs and the main shopping and employment areas**.

This would operate at a high frequency and short journey time throughout the day and be free for car park users on presentation of a valid ticket. The costs for this service would be met by the participating car park operators who would see the added value that it would bring. The service could also connect into city centre transport hubs such as Europa and Great Victoria St in order to promote public transport use.

Key to the delivery and management of parking across the city centre is the dialogue and cooperation of car park operators. While the vast majority of parking is provided by the private sector, there needs to be acknowledgement that parking requires careful management. For example, reducing parking prices could just encourage traffic back into the city centre and therefore add to congestion.

For this reason it is recommended that a Parking Forum is developed which will include stakeholders from both the private and public sector. This will help to ensure a partnership approach to parking and achieve consensus as part of the overall transportation strategy for the city.

As BCC has a stake in off-street parking, participation in the Parking Forum will ensure that influence can still be exercised with regards parking pricing, as well as ensuring an increased likelihood of delivery of the actions detailed in this parking strategy.

Collaboration within the Forum will result in greater clarity and information for users, encourage compliance with planning conditions, raise standards and manage parking prices.

A key action of the Parking Forum could be the development of a parking ‘app’ which could encompass all off-street parking sites within the city centre. Building on the popularity of existing apps such as ‘parkmobile’ (which is already in use at various sites), the dedicated city parking app could include information on the location of car parks (including Park & Ride sites), their typical occupancies at certain times of the day and their costs. This would provide information at the fingertips of users, enabling them to decide before they start their journey on where they would like to park. The system could also be used to pre-book and pay electronically for parking, increasing user confidence about parking availability.

This app should be developed through a public-private sector partnership and could utilise local software development expertise. The app could then be marketed widely, enabling tourists to make use of it as they plan their trip to the city. Some parking apps include GPS routing to individual sites, thereby wastage mileage while users try to find a site, and this could also be included subject to users obeying traffic laws regarding mobile phone use while driving.

Private sector parking providers should be encouraged to consider investing in parking technology. For example, CCTV camera systems at the entrance to car parks can be used to record vehicle number plates on entry and exit, with the parking fee then drawn down directly from the user’s online account. This would provide efficiencies in terms of back office systems and provide a better service for customers.

The potential to extend free parking for Blue Badge holders to off-street sites was recently considered by DfI however with the transfer of these sites to local councils it was recommended that councils take this matter forward. **As such the extension of free parking for Blue Badge holders to off-street sites should be considered by the Council** in order to weigh up the potential impacts.

6.1.3 Off-Street – Parking for Development

The level of PNR parking within the city centre is considered to undo many of the efforts being made to promote sustainable transport and the mass movement of people into and out of the city. If users can avail of free or cheap work-based city centre parking, they will inevitably continue to commute by car.

Whilst the level of PNR provision between older and newer developments has gradually declined as a result of planning policy, there still remains extensive provision. Some of this is provided by public sector bodies, yet this goes against broad government policy which seeks to reduce the dependence on the private car. **Government and local authority bodies should therefore lead by example and seek to remove PNR spaces or charge users for use of the PNR spaces that they provide**.

This will encourage users to consider other modes or parking opportunities, resulting in benefits to the city in terms of reduced congestion and therefore improved economic vitality. It is apparent from consultation that the provision of city centre parking for employees is not a critical factor in foreign direct investment decision making.

The level of contract parking offered by some existing city centre parking operators is over and above that stipulated within development planning conditions and the **enforcement of these conditions needs to be improved** in order to manage parking demand.

Whilst the level of parking stipulated for new development within the current Parking Standards is broadly in line with that requested in other UK and Ireland cities, **it is recommended that the current Parking Standards for development within areas of parking restraint should be re-examined in order to provide greater clarity by development type**.

Table 2 lists the Off-Street actions for public parking and that provided for development.

Table 2 – Off-Street Actions for Public and Private Parking

No.	Off-Street Public and Private Parking Action	Meets Objective(s)
7	**Maintain current parking stock, although with demand levels regularly monitored**	1 2
8	**Additional MSCPs are provided to complete the 'ring' of sites around the Inner Ring. These should only be provided when a number of adjacent surface sites are closed**	1
9	**BCC should encourage car park operators to invest in their facilities to the extent that they will achieve the Park Mark standard and improves spaces available for disabled and family parking**	4
10	**Inner Ring Shuttle Bus to connect all of the Inner Ring MSCPs and the main shopping and employment areas should be considered in consultation with Translink**	1 2 4
11	**Establish a Parking Forum**	1 2
12	**Development of city parking app**	1 4
13	**Private sector parking providers should be encouraged to consider investing in parking technology**	1

No.	Off-Street Public and Private Parking Action	Meets Objective(s)
		4
14	Extension of free parking for Blue Badge holders to off-street sites should be considered	1 4
15	Government and local authority bodies reduce or remove PNR space or charge for use	2
16	Enforcement action against car parks operating outside their planning conditions to be improved	2
17	Parking Standards to be re-examined by development type	2

6.1.4 Off-Street – BCC sites

6.1.4.1 City Centre

Whilst all of BCC's 17 city centre car parks are surface car parks, recent surveys have shown that they are well used on the whole; indeed only three sites show peak time occupancy of less than 80%. The parking costs at these sites are generally lower than adjacent private sites and there is therefore the opportunity to re-examine the tariffs at each site. BCC has recently invested in re-surfacing and provided disabled parking and family friendly provision in some of these sites, therefore localised demand may increase in the short term.

Similarly some of the car parks have a high proportion of all day parkers despite their close proximity to central areas. This means that there is a lack of parking space for those who need to make shorter visits. **The tariffs and permitted parking durations at these sites should be re-examined to relocate long stay parkers to areas further out**. This will ensure that the most desirable car parks return the highest revenues and will encourage the 'walking city' approach whereby all day parkers can park on the edge and either walk or cycle into central areas.

Season tickets can currently be purchased at seven of the BCC operated city centre car parks, although the majority of these sites are on the edge of the city core. **However BCC could potentially remove the season ticket provision at the Cromac St site in order to further discourage long stay parking in this area.**

Some of the BCC car parks may be removed as part of upcoming schemes. These include the likes of Corporation St, Frederick St, Dunbar St, Station St and Bankmore St. Provision in BCC's city centre car parks totals under 1,500 spaces and given historical observations it is considered that demand for these sites can be accommodated by adjacent car parks (particularly MSCPs) and through the delivery of additional MSCPs where the case is strong.

In the meantime it is proposed that all other BCC city centre car parks remain operational, although with a view to being incorporated and replaced by MSCP provision. In most towns and cities, local authorities provide a degree of parking themselves (either directly or via sub-contracts) and this helps to maintain influence within the market. Parking strategy guidance recommends that local authorities should seek to have increasing (rather than decreasing) influence over parking within their jurisdictions, as this assists wider aims for the overall transportation system such as promoting public transport use.

This action will maintain BCC's stake in parking and permit a level of influence that would diminish if all sites were disposed of. This will help to ensure that the objectives for the city's multi-modal transportation system are not compromised.

This will be on the proviso that each of the individual BCC car parks at least cover their costs and perform a strategic parking function. Demand and revenues will be monitored at individual sites and if it becomes apparent that some sites are unviable and there are nearby opportunities for MSCP provision then disposal should be considered in order to realise development and regeneration opportunities.

In the north-west of the city centre, the Little Donegall St, Kent St and Smithfield sites could be subsumed within nearby existing MSCP (Castle Court, City Car Park) creating new provision if required. Similarly in the south-west, the Hope St and Little Victoria St sites could be considered in the same way given current MSCP provision at Dublin Rd and Great Northern Car Park.

In the north/north-east, the Lancaster St, Corporation Square and Exchange St sites and other privately operated sites could be considered collectively. The general level of activity in this northern area will increase which may require additional MSCP provision over what is currently provided (St Anne's and Tomb St), particularly around the North St and Donegall St area, however this will be agreed according to planning department requirements. It should also be noted that the assessment of development proposals in this area to date have not assumed the closure of BCC's car park sites.

The area to the south-east, on the approach from Ormeau Rd is considered to be a MSCP 'gap' which could subsume the Charlotte St and Cromac St sites and other privately operated surface sites.

It is acknowledged that BCC cannot decide on how privately operated surface sites are taken forward however through engagement with stakeholders there is potential to achieve buy in on more strategic objectives that will further promote the economic vitality of the city centre.

6.1.4.2 Outside of the City Centre

BCC parking sites outside of the city centre are predominantly free. There is high occupancy of these sites with a significant number of all-day parkers. If capacity is to be managed, this level of all day parking needs to be reduced.

This would free up spaces for people making short trips to the area for shopping, leisure, or business/ personal reasons. **As such it is proposed that parking remains free in all sites for up to two hours. After this a modest charge per hour would apply in all 14 car parks except for Shaw's Bridge which does not show any degree of all day parkers as it is primarily for leisure use.**

This will ensure that the running costs of the car parks can be recouped and will ensure the ongoing vitality of these local areas. It is acknowledged however that such action could cause the relocation of all day parking to adjacent residential streets; **therefore a comprehensive plan for these areas should be developed in collaboration with DfI before implementation of this regime**.

Table 3 lists the Off-Street actions for the BCC sites.

Table 3 – Off-Street Actions – BCC sites

No.	Off-Street BCC Site Action	Meets Objective(s)
18	Re-examine tariffs and permitted parking durations at all sites	1 2
19	Remove season ticket provision at certain sites (i.e. Cromac St)	1 2
20	Retain all BCC sites but with a view to incorporation within MSCP provision	1
21	Introduce a modest charge after two hours at all non city centre BCC sites apart from Shaw's Bridge. P{arking to remain free for up to two hours.	1 3
22	Consider impact of above on adjacent areas and develop plan prior to implementation.	1 3

6.2 Parking in Residential Areas

The Council recognises that numerous inner city residential communities are affected by commuter parking. Commuters' consideration of pricing and car park location are key factors in their decision to avail of free parking areas in residential communities. Providing residents parking schemes in city centre areas and adjacent to arterial routes would alleviate significant commuter parking issues which currently deny local residents parking opportunities at their properties. It would also assist with wider integration with the aims of the city's multi-modal transportation system.

Although residents parking schemes have been considered for various city residential communities consensus was not reached on various aspects of the proposals including appropriate permit considerations and availability. BCC in principle supports the implementation of residents parking schemes and acknowledges that further work is required to achieve consensus.

It is important to note that in both consultations the majority of residents felt commuter parking was an issue that should be addressed through residents parking schemes. Previous consultations regarding the schemes were initially unsuccessful due largely to the cost of a Residents Permit and also the limitations of Visitors Permits. Enforcement of permits and schemes were also considered to be key to success. It was also found that different issues were pertinent in different areas.

Therefore the Council will work with local communities and stakeholders to help facilitate delivery of residents parking schemes in the near future that are specific to the areas of concern.

Table 4 lists the Parking in Residential Areas actions.

Table 4 – Parking in Residential Areas Actions

No.	Parking in Residential Areas Action	Meets Objective(s)
23	Support DFI to deliver Residents Parking Schemes in specific areas of city	3

6.3 Parking Information

The clear disparity between the perceived and actual level of parking supply needs to be overcome. This strategy has given clear evidence for this; however the public's perception that space is at a premium needs to be changed.

This can be achieved by raising the awareness of wider parking opportunities within the city. This should also include notification of other transport modes available. Far more can be achieved nowadays with the likes of electronic media and **it is recommended that in addition to the parking app, a dedicated parking website for the city is provided and linked to social media**.

The website will raise wider awareness of parking and tackle the perception that parking spaces are hard to find. Car Park Operators could contribute to the provision of this system as part of their involvement in the Parking Forum.

The city centre still lacks an integrated signage system, and **it is recommended that the feasibility of implementing such an integrated signage system should be investigated**. This should include consideration of the specification required, the technology currently available as well as procurement and running costs.

However there is the opportunity to provide a similar level of information in the digital sphere, and as vehicle technology progresses there may be the opportunity to provide in-car information and guidance systems. As such this would negate the traditional large costs associated with signage infrastructure and the associated management systems. **Therefore the feasibility of integrating parking payment and management technologies with information systems within a single comprehensive city wide system should be examined**.

It is also recommended that a wayfinding signage scheme is developed for individual areas of the city centre. This could comprise colour-coded fixed plate signage which directs users to parking areas within the likes of the Cathedral or Linenhall Quarters. This would lead users straight to these areas, thereby boosting these local economies. It would also provide better information for users seeking to park in the early evening or attending one off events in these areas, and include signage along cycle routes.

Table 5 lists the Parking Information actions

Table 5 – Parking Information Actions

No.	Parking Information Action	Meets Objective(s)
24	Dedicated Parking Website for city	4
25	Investigate an Integrated Signage System	1 4
26	Investigate integrating parking payment, management technologies and information systems in a city wide system	4
27	Wayfinding signage scheme for individual areas of city centre, including cycling routes	4

6.4 Complementary Actions

This section details the range of actions which have a complementary role within the parking strategy. These are considered complementary because they are either (1) indirectly associated with parking per se, or (2) are not distinct priorities for BCC themselves yet they may assist in the overall delivery of the parking strategy. As such they would be dependent on agencies and organisations other than BCC such as DfI, Translink and car park operators.

It is acknowledged that in some instances there is significant overlap between the agencies responsible for delivering these actions. Also, the organisation responsible for developing or financing a particular action may not be ultimately responsible for the day to day delivery or operation of it.

6.4.1 Promoting sustainable commuter travel

The provision of a new rail halt at Gamble Street in the north of the city centre would reduce parking pressures in that area via modal shift. This would be particularly important given the ongoing university relocation and adjacent new development. As well as providing a convenient access point for education and work trips, the new halt would also provide convenient access to the likes of the Cathedral Quarter.

The provision of new Park & Ride sites would reduce the amount of traffic entering the city centre and parking. A high level analysis has identified a number of locations where there are gaps in the Park & Ride offer, and these could include:

- Park & Ride sites earmarked within BMTP but not yet implemented
- Additional Park & Ride on Belfast radials e.g. Castlereagh Road
- Additional Park & Ride on M2 & M5 Corridor

Improve parking at train stations (including for cycles) makes the train more attractive to use thereby reducing parking pressure in city centre. A lot of investment in train station parking has been made in the past few years and this has proved popular, however further provision will be required as the city's attractiveness grows.

Minimising traffic in the BMTP core Reclaims core for sustainable modes, congestion and pollution benefits. Parking relocated to outer areas, closing of streets, removal of parking spaces, triggers regeneration.

6.4.2 Coach and Cycle Parking

A number of potential city centre coach parking sites that have been considered by various parties to date. Such a site should be located sufficiently close to the city centre, yet away from areas of high crime. **It is recommended that further work is carried out to confirm the preferred location of site and that it is provided as a matter of urgency.** This should include consideration of associated provision for tour operators such as coach parking maps.

Many of the Belfast Bike docking stations are within walking distance of city centre car parks. **The location of further docking stations will facilitate the gradual shift of off-street parking out towards the Inner Ring**. Coverage from the current 33 city centre docking stations is good however more opportunities may arise to provide additional stations at new MSCPs.

To further promote cycling BCC should investigate the feasibility of providing a Cycle Parking Hub, located within the core of the city centre. This should be located in a high visibility location and provide security for cyclists and biking equipment. Similar sites provided elsewhere offer ample parking provision; CCTV and on-site attendants and some even include free pushchair loans for parents.

BCC should also undertake a review of the level of cycle parking provided for new developments in order to maximise the potential for cycle use for a variety of land use types. BCC now have a planning role, and this should ensure that there is sufficient high quality cycle parking provided in order to encourage modal shift to and from workplaces, shops and leisure complexes.

6.4.3 Taxi parking provision

Parking for taxis needs to be examined citywide. Ranks should be located in appropriate locations, where there is sufficient space and near to where customers are. The Council will support efforts to provide suitable locations for taxi parking, acknowledging the competing demands for kerb space, in order to maintain the vitality of the city centre.

Table 6 lists the Coach and Cycle Parking actions.

Table 6 – Complementary Actions

No.	Complementary Actions	Meets Objective(s)
28	Gamble Street Halt	C1
29	New Park & Ride sites	C1
30	Improve parking at train stations (including for cycles)	C1
31	Minimising traffic in the BMTP core	C1
32	Review Park & Ride costs versus city centre parking charges	C1
33	Confirm location of off-street coach park and provide facility	C2
34	Provide additional Belfast Bikes docking stations associated with parking facilities	C2
35	Examine feasibility of a Cycle Parking Hub	C2
36	Review the level of cycle parking provided for new developments	C2
37	Examine taxi parking provision citywide	C3

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