

## Canterbury City Council's OSPPO (off road parking) Consultation – Canterbury BID Response

8 January 2024

Canterbury BID has run two consultation workshops and surveys on transport and parking in recent years, and they are available on the BID website <https://www.canterburybid.co.uk/representation/>.

For this year's consultation, we welcomed Richard Moore, Head of Transportation and Environment at CCC, and Cllr Alex Ricketts, Cabinet Member for Tourism, Movement and Rural Development, to the BID Board meeting on 15 November 2023 and extended invitations to representatives from the city's business quarters.

We recognise that we are in a "transport transition" and that a reduction in carbon emissions and congestion is essential. However, we also have to recognise that increasing car parking prices alone – without any other change to our transport infrastructure – will have a negative impact on businesses, on their employees and on our residents. Measures discouraging car use need to be supported by additional public and active transport, which is necessary in order to achieve environmental objectives without adversely affecting city centre footfall.

If businesses – many of whom continue to struggle post-pandemic due to rising costs and disruptions to the supply chain – fail as a result of these changes, there will be a further increase in vacant units and a negative impact on the Council budget through business rates.

We understand that local authorities are underfunded and we want to work with the Council to ensure Canterbury can remain a thriving city for everyone who uses the city. We very much welcome investment in Castle Street Multi Storey and investment in marketing / incentive strategies. We would like to be involved and support a clear strategy to focus on positive messaging and signposting.

Below is a summary of questions and points of feedback.

### **Strategic**

- What is car parking for? Is parking about raising revenue for local services? Is it a service to the public, residents and visitors alike? Or, is it to support businesses as part of an economic regeneration strategy?
- What was the strategic decision-making process for the proposed increases? How does this proposal link to Canterbury's wider transport strategy?
- Canterbury welcomed 16 million + visitors in 2023. Was the consultation sent proactively to visitors?

### **Economic Development oversight**

- Has there been a cost/benefit analysis done in terms of economic impact?
- Businesses are still in a very precarious position. Footfall is recovering but the cost of doing business remains very high, which means profit margins are low with many businesses

carrying debt from the pandemic. Hospitality and ENTE are at most risk. This impacts on employment and eventually on business rates.

- The vast majority of businesses who participate in our car parking consultation workshops and questionnaires say that increasing car parking charges has a significantly negative/damaging impact on business and significant revenue will be lost.
- Car drivers are the biggest spenders. With business margins so tight due to rising costs, this puts jobs and businesses at risk. Strong view that car parking increases will put businesses at risk.
- Customer decision making in our key catchment area is impacted by price. Customers in this zone are almost exclusively car driving customers with limited public transport. These are our biggest cash spenders and they will drive further, adding to the climate emergency, to drive down their parking costs out of principle.
- Competition – Canterbury is in direct competition with nearby shopping centres that offer free parking. This must be a consideration.

#### **Incentive strategies, marketing and comms**

- Incentive strategies and positive marketing are crucial. We understand that some funding will be available for marketing and comms. Can we be involved in the development of the strategy and campaign? We would like to see a clear incentivising strategy focussed on positive messaging and wayfinding. For example, 'parking from £1.70ph /£1.90ph ... 3 minutes from the city centre along the Kings Mile/Castle Quarter', showing how close these car parks are to shopping / key destinations – this could also be a good way to show the value of some of the LUF investment. The city's car parks are perfectly reasonable walking distances and in some cities, you wouldn't be able to park this close. If we push the positive narrative, we could win back some customers.
- Can you look at peak and off peak, matching this with low footfall days, to encourage people to try Park & Ride? The idea being that this wouldn't negate existing income but could serve as a boost – financial for the Council (also from a decarbonisation / congestion perspective) and boosting economic impact.
- Will there be new incentives for EVs?
- Park & Ride – Is it true that some/all Stagecoach buses can be used to return to Park & Ride? If so, what can be done to promote that?

#### **Specific questions / points**

- Rosemary Lane has been shut now for 3 years+. Why can't it be reopened for business use? Whilst it's not in use, it needs to be kept tidy – otherwise, the broken window syndrome kicks in.
- Castle Street Multi Storey. Very pleased to hear that £300,000 is being invested to improve Castle Street Multi Storey (cleaning, lighting) as it is much needed. We receive regular stories like this one:  
Recently a client parked in Castle Street Multi-storey. She was concerned about returning to her car after her appointment, so I walked her back and used the stair well to enter. There was human faeces and stank of urine. Women do not feel safe using this car park.
- Public transport is unreliable and not always accessible, not least for people who arrive early and leave late for work, and in many cases remains costly, so not a viable option for many.
- Do you have to park in order to ride? What if you cycle or walk to a Park & Ride – can you then jump on a bus? Can this be communicated explicitly.

- Park and Ride:
  - We welcome the proposal to re-open Sturry and agree this needs to run later in the evening to serve the night time economy and enable people to return home after work.
  - Can every bus that passes Park & Ride stop there?
  - Could there be season tickets for Park & Ride?
- Wayfinding is absolutely crucial. How will these proposals link to LUF?
- Better wayfinding is essential, especially the signage as you enter Canterbury. We understand that KCC are responsible for the signage outside the city centre. WiFi / connectivity is so poor which is partially why the digital signs (indicating number of spaces available) don't work. How can this be addressed?
- Suggestion to reconsider collection points as a direct mitigation to the impact of car parking prices increases to incentivise shoppers.
- What incentives will be provided? Suggestion to offer discounts at low peak times.
- Suggestion to include maps and visual marketing collateral as part of the marketing campaign, as discussed with the BID team, so people know how close they are to their designation. Include "concentric circle" style maps around the city with an indication of how long it will take to walk from point a to point b, for example.
- University perspective – 1/3 of students are commuters. Both students and staff would like to reduce their carbon footprint, but the reality is that some still need to park. What conversations are CCC having with other transport providers?
- Why remove the 20% EV discount offered to ANPR account holders and permit holders?