



## **Castle Gateway Parking Options**

### **Introduction**

This note discusses key parking decisions linked with the Castle Gateway project. Within the local area there are three Council owned and controlled car parks – Castle Car Park, St George’s Field and the Coppergate Centre also known as Piccadilly, there are a further two privately operated car parks serving this area of the city – Shambles Q Park and Peel Street. The paper considers two scenarios in relation to Council assets, and explores the implications, parking demand and capacity issues flowing from these, including in the context of broader pricing changes. These scenarios are:

- Option 1 - where Castle Car Park is retained
- Option 2 - where Castle car park is closed and repurposed, and wider assets upgraded

### **Supply: Current Situation and Options**

There are three principal car parks in the southeast quadrant of York city centre, these being Castle car park, St George’s Field, and Coppergate Centre. Between them they have 776 standard, 64 blue badge and 27 coach spaces as summarised in the table below, in addition Q Park Shambles and Peel Street Car Park provide a further 325 spaces, and on-street parking exists.

<b>Car park</b>	<b>Car spaces</b>	<b>Blue badge spaces</b>	<b>Coach spaces</b>	<b>Total</b>
Castle Car Park	268	30	0	298
St Georges Field	260	6	27	293

Coppergate Centre	248	28	0	276
<b>Total</b>	<b>776</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>867</b>

In **Option 1** Castle Car Park is retained, though it is important to note that even in this scenario there are maintenance and operational issues affecting the car park's capacity and incurring capital expenditure. Castle Car Park now suffers from a severely dilapidated surface and has very narrow turning aisles. If it is retained it would need to be resurfaced and relined as the spaces are not standard at present. In this option there is an assumption that if the car park is retained that these failings are addressed. This necessary works would result in the following:

- Removal of one double row of parking spaces (60 spaces) to widen the turning aisles. Under this option the number of parking spaces available at Castle Car Park would fall from 298 spaces to 238 spaces.
- An assumed central cost for resurfacing, relining, and upgrading the car park to best practice standards of approximately **£750k**. This would have to be funded from the existing parking maintenance budget.

The resultant supply position is summarised below:

<b>Car park</b>	<b>Car spaces</b>	<b>Blue badge spaces</b>	<b>Coach spaces</b>	<b>Total</b>
Castle Car Park	208	30	0	238
St Georges Field	260	6	27	293
Coppergate	248	28	0	276
<b>TOTAL (option 1)</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>807</b>

In **Option 2**, the non-blue badge spaces on Castle Car Park are closed and repurposed – with just the 30 existing blue badge spaces retained (although relocated elsewhere within the car park). Consequently, parking availability would be:

<b>Car park</b>	<b>Car spaces</b>	<b>Blue badge spaces</b>	<b>Coach spaces</b>	<b>Total</b>
Castle Car Park	0	30	0	30
St Georges Field	260	6	27	293
Coppergate	248	28	0	276
<b>TOTAL (option 2)</b>	<b>508</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>599</b>

Although not directly considered in this paper, there is potential for capacity to be increased somewhat on the St Georges Field surface car park. This will be considered as part of the forthcoming Movement & Place study, in order to ensure a coordinated city-wide approach. Previous work has indicated a potential for accommodating an additional 37 spaces through relatively straightforward works including relining and looking at how coach movements are managed in the city. Given the relatively minor impact of these changes, and their interdependency with wider Movement & Place matters including coach parking, this uplift has not been carried forward within this assessment, but is useful to note.

### **Demand: Current Situation**

It is not currently possible to extract direct data on demand levels from the Council's parking management information. However, assessments of parking activity in the car parks have been prepared based on a count undertaken during a site visit (in January 2025). January is, of course, a relatively quiet time for parking activity in York, and an accepted grossing methodology using bus ticket sales at the park and ride sites as a proxy has been adopted to derive average and peak month occupancy from this. Based on this methodology, January represents 68% of "average" month activity, and only just above half of peak month activity. This data results in the following observed and derived demand levels across the three assets:

<b>Car park</b>	<b>Spaces available (inc. blue badge)</b>	<b>Observed occupancy (Jan 22<sup>nd</sup> at 2:30PM<sup>1</sup>)</b>	<b>Average month occupancy</b>	<b>Peak month (Aug/ Dec) occupancy</b>
Castle	298	c164 (55%)	240	329
SGF	266	c67 (25%)	97	133
Coppergate	274	c97 (35%)	141	194
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>838</b>	<b>c328 (39%)</b>	<b>478 (57%)</b>	<b>656 (78%)</b>

To allow a more nuanced understanding of average and peak month occupancy, footfall data and parking transaction information were also analysed as proxies. These datasets revealed figures of 67% average month/ 81% peak month combined car park occupancy based on footfall, and 52% average month / 62% peak month occupancy based on transactions (both against 57% and 78% for park and ride data per the table above). It should be noted though that footfall data will not be a

wholly comparable proxy, reflecting whole demand by all modes and for city residents also. The average of all three proxies is 59% average month and 74% peak month.

The data highlights a series of important points - if parking activity is assessed across the three existing Council car parks (and not including further privately operated assets in the local area), these calculations would suggest:

- Even in the peak month, average occupancy at 78%<sup>2</sup> is some way below a theoretical 90%<sup>3</sup> design capacity if considered across all three car parks.
- In the peak month there is excess demand at Castle. Applying the “90% rule” suggests that around 60 drivers arriving at Castle car park in the peak 2 hour period would need to find a space elsewhere (assumed here to be at SGF or Coppergate – although in practice other parking is available at Peel Street, various on-street locations etc.) This could be a source of parking search congestion, especially if, as now, the real time parking guidance system is inoperative. However, across just these three car parks, adequate space is available to accommodate this demand.
- In the “average” month (say a Wednesday in October or March) all the car parks can accommodate demands made on them. Even the busiest, Castle, would be only about 80% occupied on this “average” day, and across all three car parks 43% (362) spaces are unoccupied.
- Discussion with Parking Services suggests there are about 20 “really busy” days a year when all the city centre parking space in York is used. These are generally weekends in late November and December when the Christmas markets are operating. These 20 days place exceptional demands on York’s parking.

All these observations are predicated on the static and maintained current demand for parking, whereas policy interventions will impact this moving forward. Analysis of car park transaction data reveals that there are theoretically 80 days where demand exceeds capacity across the retained Council car parks in option 2, though forecast demand modelling taking into account the impact of the price changes (see section below) reduces this to just 30 days.

There is an implication of this analysis: although the car parks are well used in the peak month, for much of the year there is significant parking

overcapacity in the south-eastern quadrant of York city centre, even when looking just at these three core Council assets. In an average day in an average month, the number of unoccupied spaces across all three car parks (362) exceeds the total number of spaces in Castle car park (currently 298, reducing to 238 in Option 1 and 30 blue badge spaces that would be retained in Option 2). Derived demand data also reveals that there are significantly more months each year (9) when use is at or below average levels, than there are when use exceeds average levels (there are 3 – August, November and December). Existing levels of peak month demand exceed combined capacity under option 2 (removal of castle car park) by 57 spaces – this is before looking at broader capacity of non-Council parking assets and on street parking, or future demand levels impacted by policy decisions.

The question of the extent to which CYC makes city centre space available to cater for the visitor parking peak in York is one for Members to consider – but it is reasonable to ask, in a location like Castle car park where parking space is being provided at the opportunity cost of other, potentially very high amenity uses, whether parking capacity which is only required because it is in excess of space available in other car parks in the immediate area in three months each year, is a justifiable use of that space.

### **Demand: Forecast Situation (impact of price changes)**

The analysis so far does not consider the impact of the changes to parking charges which now form a commitment in CYC's budget for 2025/6. On 21<sup>st</sup> January CYC's Executive committed to increase off street parking prices in York by approximately 56% for the first two hours of parking, falling to a 10% increase for subsequent hours, with a two hour stay increasing in price from £6.20 to £9.70.

Studies have examined the link between the price of car parking and demand, and there is general agreement that short term parking price elasticity is around -0.3, meaning that a 10% rise in parking price will lead to a 3% fall in demand<sup>4</sup>. This implies a 16.8% reduction in parking demand for a 56% price increase as summarised in the table below (NB although the price increases are lower than 56% for durations of stay over 2 hours, it is not possible due to the nature of the information collected from CYC car parks to calculate the 'real' percentage price rise per stay, given the wide variability of stay duration, and so the 56% figure has been taken forward for analysis as a conservative estimate): :



	£3	£5	£7.5	£9	£9	£9	£3.5 (to 7.30am)	£16
<b>Q Park Shambles (248 spaces)</b>								
Entry from 00:00 to 06:59	£2	£4	£6	£8	£10	£12	£27.5	£27.5
Entry from 07:00 to 09:59	£3.5	£7	£10.5	£14	£17.5	£21	£27.5	£27.5
Entry from 10:00 to 14:59	£4	£8	£12	£16	£20	N/A	£27.5	£27.5
Entry from 15:00 to 17:59	£3.5	£7	£10.5	N/A	N/A	N/A	£27.5	£27.5
Entry from 18:00 to 23:59	£3	£6	£9	£12	N/A	N/A	£27.5	£27.5

Blue Badge holders can park in any of CYC car parks free of charge (within opening hours) in either a disabled or standard bay, and they can also park on single yellow lines or double yellow lines, for a maximum of 3 hours.

### **Revenue Impacts**

For **Option One**, with the parking price increase, it is assumed that space is available to accommodate parking demand on the average day in all months. On the basis that there are 20 exceptional days a year when all parking is full, then there would be a loss of approximately £23,000 pa<sup>5</sup> - although this is possibly an overestimate because, with higher prices, there would be an impact on parking demand even on the “exceptional” days.

For **Option Two**, although capacity is generally able to accommodate demand after the price changes, there are a number of additional effects:

- On 11 days a year<sup>6</sup> St George’s Field is flooded – there is a loss of revenue from this because, under Option 2, a greater proportion of the parking space in the south eastern quadrant of York City Centre is in St George’s Field and the Council is therefore more exposed to the revenue effect of the loss of this space
- There are operating cost savings from ceasing to operate Castle Car Park – i.e. need to patrol it, maintenance costs, repairs and replacements, though the redevelopment proposals will themselves result in ongoing operational costs (including for the new green spaces created), these would be in respect of a newly constructed and modern specification facility, and would likely result in a net saving to the authority, particularly in comparison with the option of retaining the asset as is and bringing up to standard, identified elsewhere in this paper at c£750k.
- There is potential for new income to CYC from the new green space created by closing Castle Car Park

An attempt has not been made to calculate changes in operating cost/ income from new uses, but in terms of parking revenue:

- On the 20 really busy days a year (e.g. December weekends) it would continue to be possible to fill all the parking space available across all three car parks for the four hours in the middle of the day (11AM-3PM). Although this is based on previous years' experience, and the number of very busy days for car parking may reduce over time in response to the pricing changes, in order to take a conservative view on income, loss is modelled at 4 hours (£19.40) parking for 230 spaces for 20 days = £89,240.
- We could also assume that there is a revenue loss on the days that St George's Field is flooded because of the loss of overall capacity in the area. Assuming average month occupancy levels on the 11 days effected suggests loss of approx. 4 hours parking on 92 spaces (demand = 398 parking acts – with SGF flooded there are 306 spaces available) = £19,633.
- Total = approx. £109,000 pa (falling to £86,000 if assessed against Option 1).

### **Conclusions and Next Steps**

The above calculations have been made using base information and grossing techniques. They represent a reasonable attempt to assess demand on the basis of both limited demand information and time available to interpret it. Parking Services indicate that the occupancy levels used in the forecasts fit broadly with their experience of the car parks in use.

Nonetheless, the conclusion of this analysis should be that, **with parking price uplifts now applied, parking demand in the south-eastern sector of York can broadly be accommodated in the available capacity across Council car parks, even on an average day of the peak month once Castle car park is repurposed.** As set out above, this does not mean that space will always be available – some days will be exceptionally busy (see footnote 2) – and floods which affect St George's Field will reduce supply in this area of the city by approximately 50% - so there is a resilience implication and some loss of revenue from that. However, in general, the analysis would suggest that the available car parking supply in option 2 is adequate in all but exceptional circumstances, even before residual capacity in non-Council operated assets is factored.



Modelled revenue implications of the proposed Option 2 appear to be a loss of around £90,000 pa against a plausible alternative (Option 1).

In order to minimise revenue losses to the authority and displacement of parking to more peripheral locations from the Centre, ways to increase the usage of Coppergate by improving its attractiveness and ease of access to drivers should be explored. A longlist of potential options is set out below, informed by discussions with the CYC manager of car parking, retail operators, and a site visit. The timing of these works in relation to the closure of Castle Car Park under option 2 would need to be carefully managed, and key elements expedited to minimise disruption to traffic flow and establish behavioural patterns at a formative stage.

- Works to make the facility accessible over longer operating hours
- There is an existing electronic parking space occupancy screen for 'Picadilly' on Tower Street, an additional screen could be provided close to the entrance to the car park and potentially also at other key locations on the access routes so drivers could deviate to alternative parking as required. Consideration could also be given to the reinstatement of the parking guidance system to manage parking search congestion, though this is a broader city-wide intervention.
- Additional physical signage directing drivers to the car park from suitable and sufficient routes into the city centre, along with additional signage for pedestrians returning to their cars.
- Review and improvement to the entrance of the car park to make it easier for vehicles to enter and leave the car park and safety of pedestrians crossing.
- Retailers and site observations have noted cars entering the car park were significantly slowing to manage the turn from what looks to be a narrow filter lane – improvements to the geometry of the access could benefit both vehicles and pedestrians through removing unnecessary congestion, and will be explored as part of wider planned Picadilly corridor improvement works.
- Review of entrance signage for potential to improve visibility and/or desirability to drivers.
- Car bay layout –review of layout and size of spaces, with consideration to improve attractiveness and accessibility.

- Decoration – review of refreshing any painted areas and colours could be allocated to each level to assist drivers remembering what floor they have parked on.
- Lighting – review to ensure the required lux levels are being provided.
- Security review – part of the work to enable the car park to be operational over longer hours.
- It is also understood as well that NEXT will be opening in November 2025 in the vacant unit with frontage adjacent to the car park entrance, which will be a positive impact visually.

## **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Although the occupancy surveys reported here are very crude, discussion with Parking Services suggested that observed use levels were in line with their experience – particularly that there was usually some space availability even in the peak months. Discussions suggested there were perhaps 20 days a year when the capacity of all three car parks was exceeded and there was significant park search congestion in the southeast quadrant of York.

<sup>2</sup> This is for an “average” day in the peak month. Consequently, it is not to say that there will not be individual very busy days (e.g. Saturdays before Christmas, August bank holiday) when capacity is exceeded – but on average it is not, even at peak occupancy time (assessed as being between 11AM and 3PM).

<sup>3</sup> Parking design standards suggest spaces provided should assume a peak practical occupancy of 90% as “full” to allow for imperfections such as lack of knowledge about available spaces, large or badly parked vehicles occupying more than one space, people entering and leaving etc. Arguably, even 90% is too high for Castle Car Park because the narrow turning aisles and small spaces mean some spaces cannot, in practice, be accessed when it is busy.

<sup>4</sup> (<https://www.climateexchange.org.uk/publications/reducing-car-use-through-parking-policies-an-evidence-review/> and Marsden, G.R. (2006) The evidence base for parking policies - a review. Transport Policy, 13 (6). pp. 447-457. ISSN 0967-070X).

<sup>5</sup> hours parking lost across 60 spaces on 20 days a year.

<sup>6</sup> Average over last 10 years