



Thriving Council Committee

Date 25th June 2026

Subject: West Lindsey District Council Parking Strategy 2026 – 2031

Report by:

Director of Corporate Services (S151 Officer)

Contact Officer:

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Executive Summary:

West Lindsey District Council has commissioned a new Parking Strategy to ensure the parking service continues to support thriving town centres, sustainable transport, regeneration, and financial resilience across Gainsborough and Market Rasen. The strategy responds to changing travel habits, hybrid working, local growth, and environmental priorities, while building on earlier reviews in 2015, 2017, 2022 and 2024.

The WLDC Parking Strategy 2026–2031 sets out a comprehensive, evidence-led plan to ensure parking provision across Gainsborough and Market Rasen remains accessible, financially sustainable, safe, and aligned with the district’s long-term economic, environmental, and technological objectives.

Appendices to Report

- Appendix 1 - Car Parking Strategy 2026-2031 and Action Plan
- Appendix 2 - 2025 Consultation Feedback Report
- Appendix 3 – Parking Value for Money Review 2024

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- (a) That the draft Parking Strategy and Action Plan are approved**
- (b) That the Strategy is refreshed in 5 years (2031-32)**
- (c) That the findings to date from the 2-hour free parking trial in Gainsborough be noted, and that approval be given to extend the trial for a further six months, until 31 January 2027, in order to allow sufficient time for a decision relating to Local Government**

Reorganisation (LGR), to support continued engagement with local businesses, and to enable the collection of additional data to inform a final assessment.

- (d) That members approve the use of the Investment for Growth Reserve to the value of £24,300 to mitigate the forecast loss of car parking income if recommendation c is approved.**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) commissioned Parking Matters to complete our new Parking Strategy to ensure that our parking provision continues to support the vitality and functionality of its town centres, whilst contributing to wider objectives including sustainable transport, regeneration, and long-term financial resilience. The strategy focuses on the key settlements of Gainsborough and Market Rasen, where existing council owned car parks facilities are located and reflects the Council's commitment to maintaining an effective and responsive parking service.
- 1.2 This strategy has been developed in the context of significant changes in travel behaviour, including the growth of hybrid working patterns, evolving economic conditions, anticipated local development, and increasing environmental considerations. It also builds upon previous parking reviews conducted in 2015, 2017, 2022, and 2024, ensuring continuity while responding to emerging challenges and opportunities.
- 1.3 The strategy is structured around five themes:
- Technology & Data Integration – Modernising systems through contactless payments, digital permits, enhanced data insights, and integration with the National Parking Platform.
 - Fair & Well Managed Parking – Maintaining council control, transparent KPIs, proportionate enforcement, and strong financial monitoring.
 - Safety & Quality – Improving surfacing, drainage, signage, bay sizes, accessibility, and overall estate quality.
 - Balancing Supply & Demand – Optimising current capacity, protecting short stay spaces, responding to housing growth, and adjusting tariffs sustainably.
 - Town Specific Interventions – Tailored actions addressing the differing needs of Gainsborough and Market Rasen

2 Overall Position

- 2.1 Parking capacity across both towns is sufficient, with peak occupancy averaging 63% in Gainsborough and 67% in Market Rasen. However, demand is unevenly distributed, with some car parks operating near capacity at busy periods while others, such as the Riverside in Gainsborough, are consistently underutilised. Improving highways signage and car park naming is therefore essential to rebalance usage and enhance the customer experience.
- 2.2 The parking service itself benchmarks well nationally, delivering a budget surplus in 2024/25 and demonstrating strong management, compliance, and user satisfaction, with more than 77% of users rating the car parks as well managed and over 80% feeling safe.

3 Impact of the free parking trial

- 3.1 The two-hour free parking trial in Gainsborough has influenced behaviour but has not clearly driven increased visits to the town centre. Evidence suggests displacement rather than growth, with Council car parks gaining transactions while competitor private owned car park experienced substantial reductions. Short-stay visits were rising even before the trial began, and long-stay visits declined however these are now starting to stabilise.
- 3.2 Customer feedback, including businesses and visitors cite the perceived positive impact of the 2-hour free parking trial.
- 3.3 In the financial year 2024/25 the parking service generated a £25k surplus after covering its own running costs. In 2025/26 the service reported a £96k surplus enhanced by grant funding of £21k from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).
- The **budgeted** surplus for 2025/26 was £68k – the gain of £28k is primarily due to central support service (CSS) recharges being below the budgeted level, which does not impact on the bottom line of the accounts, and UKSPF funding.
- Excluding these items the car parking service reported a **loss of £13k**.
- 3.4 Since the implementation of the trial P&D income has dropped by £4k per month currently mitigated using UKSPF funding until August 2026.
- 3.5 If the scheme were to extend by 6 months beyond the pilot period, there is a forecast budgetary pressure of £24.3k in 2026/27. This will be funded from the Investment for Growth reserve.

4 Key Policy and Strategy Recommendations

- 4.1 A full action plan has been provided for approval within the appended strategy for approval however below provides a brief overview of the recommendations.
- Upgrade pay machines to accept contactless payments and introduce fully digital permit system.
 - Join the National Parking Platform to broaden payment options and improve data connectivity.
 - Adopt a cautious, regionally coordinated approach to EV infrastructure expansion while removing free parking for EVs during charging.
 - Introduce flexible permit types aligned with hybrid working patterns.
 - Review Blue Badge concessions and conduct a staff travel survey before considering any changes to staff parking policy.
 - Pilot overnight motorhome parking at Riverside and expand coach parking in partnership with LCC.
- 4.2 **Town-Specific Priorities:**

4.2.1 Gainsborough: No expansion required; focus on highway signage, car park naming, monitoring future housing impacts, and continue evaluating the long-term viability of the free parking concession.

4.2.2 Market Rasen: Maintain ample short stay capacity, monitor gradual growth, and strengthen accessibility and EV provision proportionately.

5 Committee Recommendations

5.1 This paper seeks approval from Thriving Council committee for the following recommendations.

- That the draft Parking Strategy and Action Plan are approved
- That members of Thriving Council Committee delegate operational oversight and delivery of the action plan to the appropriate board.
- That the Strategy is refreshed in 5 years (2031-32)
- That the findings so far for the 2-hour free parking trial in Gainsborough are noted and a 6-month extension to the 31st January is agreed to allow time for a decision to be released in relation to LGR, continued engagement with businesses and allow for further data collection.

6 Alternative Options

	Option	Rational for not recommending
1	To not update the strategy (do nothing)	This would leave the Council without clear strategic direction regarding its car parking policy and, in turn, a lack of support for residents, visitors, businesses, and motorists.
2	To not extend the 2-hour free parking trial by 6 months.	This would not allow sufficient time to consult further with businesses, fully understand the findings following any LGR decision, or gather additional data in the meantime.
3	To explore further free parking options.	It is acknowledged that this would be better undertaken following approval of a six-month extension, once an LGR decision has been reached.

ASSOCIATED IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

This report does not pose any legal implications

Financial: FIN/40/27/TC/BK

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Staffing:

This report does not pose any staffing or human resources implications.

LGR implications:

The approval of this strategy does not directly influence any Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) decisions. However, it is acknowledged that there may be opportunities in the future to align tariffs with any prospective shadow authority.

Under LGR arrangements, West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) car parks may also be considered for community asset transfer, should there be a desire to pursue this option.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:

This report does not negatively impact any Equality and Diversity implications.

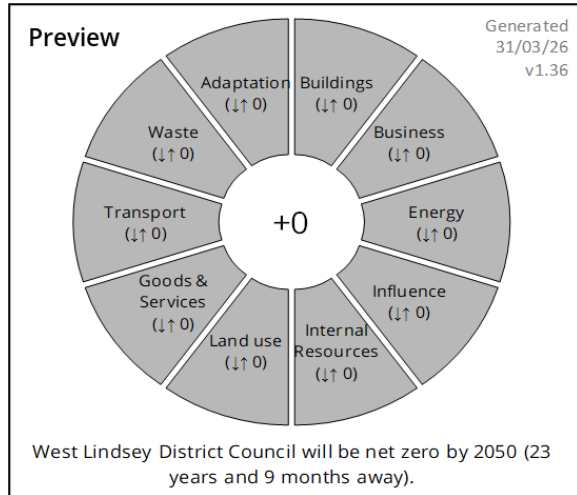
Data Protection Implications:

This report does not pose any Data Protection implications.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

The recommendations in the report take in account local environmental & sustainability aims regarding reducing carbon emissions.

The findings of this report provide a neutral environmental impact; it should be noted however approval for the continuation of the 2-hour free trial in Gainsborough or free staff parking could impact negatively.



Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

This report does not pose any crime and disorder implications

Health Implications:

This report does not pose any health implications.

Risk Assessment:

- Financial Risk: Medium – The continuation of Gainsborough 2 hour free parking period means the car parking service would not be operating on a cost recovery basis, which means the Council would effectively be covering the difference. Usually the Council looks to operate a cost recovery method for fees and charges.
- Reputational Risk: High – the removal of any free parking period regardless of if it is a trial is going to be perceived negatively. This can be mitigated to some extent through clear communication of any decisions made.
- Undermining active travel – Low – Any offer of free parking encourages driving over walking and public transport.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

No previous background papers used in preparation of this report however it does build on the previous WLDC 2022-25 parking strategy.

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No