



Parking in Dewsbury

This paper makes proposals by the Dewsbury Chamber of Trade regarding car parking in Dewsbury. It follows extensive consultation with all members of the Chamber during May/June 2022 and is intended to promote economic activity in the town in support of the major Towns Fund and council investments.

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Background

The investment of close to £60 million pounds of central and local government funding in the town in the near future means that every feature that may encourage people to visit, shop and do business in the town should be reexamined by all stakeholders.

There are known difficulties arising from the limited quantity of on street parking close to town centre shops and this needs managing. But the overriding concern of Dewsbury business owners is the competitive disadvantage they perceive when businesses in all other North Kirklees towns benefit from free parking for their customers.

We are unable to identify a reason for this and would be pleased to hear from anyone with an explanation.

In 2022, we are faced with this additional obstacle which frustrates any effort to encourage more and longer visits both by local residents as well as visitors in support of the TIP.

Policy context

Kirklees Economic Strategy 2019-2025 adopts place based decision making:

"PRIORITY 5 - REVITALISED CENTRES

*'Using a forward looking, **place based approach** to revitalising and promoting centres across Huddersfield, North and South Kirklees to celebrate our district's diversity'*

P40 para 2 - *'..we will enable **locally tailored approaches** to the development of our places.'*

A new parking policy tailored to Dewsbury's specific needs is entirely in accordance with council policy.

The High Street Report of 2018 recommends that councils review their parking arrangements *"to make sure that existing restrictions and charges are working to support accessibility to local businesses, encouraging footfall and attracting customers"*

The Grimsey Review 2 says *"Each town needs a customer-led parking strategy, catering to the different needs of workers, visitors and local residents."* NB The author, Bill Grimsey, being the front man for the council's presentations of both the Huddersfield and Dewsbury Blueprints.

Local Leadership Report produced by the Federation of Small Businesses draws on the work of 150,000 businesses throughout the country to guide local government on business issues and states: *"..the starting point for parking policy and management strategy must be local knowledge"*

The following section describes the unique challenges faced by Dewsbury which needs a unique 'place based' solution to deal with them.

Problems

Infrastructure

The car park is often a visitor's first experience of a town and can shape a long lasting opinion. The condition of the infrastructure is therefore important.

In Dewsbury the experience of both residents and visitors is of:

1. Poor signage, particularly to the main off-street car parks
2. Poor street markings
3. Poor maintenance of associated plantings

4. Poor maintenance of 'gateway' locations e.g. arrival from Cliffe Street to Market.
5. Poor safety and security after dark
6. Confusing juxtaposition of different charging scales
7. Limited on-street parking space available within the ring road.
8. No advice for visitors directing them to the limited parks where it is possible to park for long periods. Their experience is therefore of time limited parking with fear of a penalty.
9. Aggressive ticketing by enforcement officers.

Policy issues

10. The TIP strategies centre around increasing footfall and dwell time. We therefore need to reduce to a minimum all obstacles to visitors coming into the town and staying as long as possible. However, car parking is consistently raised by the community and business owners as being an obstacle to both short and long term visitors.
11. The Kirklees Economic Strategy 2019-2025 refers to *"Using a forward looking, **place based approach** to revitalising and promoting centres across Huddersfield, North and South Kirklees to celebrate our district's diversity". (p40 Revitalised Centres). It would be consistent with council policy to develop an approach that helped deliver solutions to the problems experienced in Dewsbury.*
12. The Dewsbury Blueprint states: *"We'll make Dewsbury a destination town...". This can only be achieved by creating a welcoming and attractive environment that encourages longer visits both during the day and to support the night time economy.*
13. In a [recent announcement](#) about shop closures, Marks & Spencer stated: *"We recognise that in an omni-channel world, **ease of shopping and fast access is critical to competitiveness**, and in many cases we believe the town centre locations have lost impetus as a result of failed local authority or government policy."*

Councils and communities want development in town centres while the merchants like M&S want 'ease and access' to facilitate shopping that delivers profits. Their priority to make profit dictates their move out of town centres. From this comes the regeneration strategy for town centres of attracting smaller, niche retailers selling products that are not available in the big stores - **yet the need for ease and access remains applicable** to niche retailers the same as any other type of shopping.

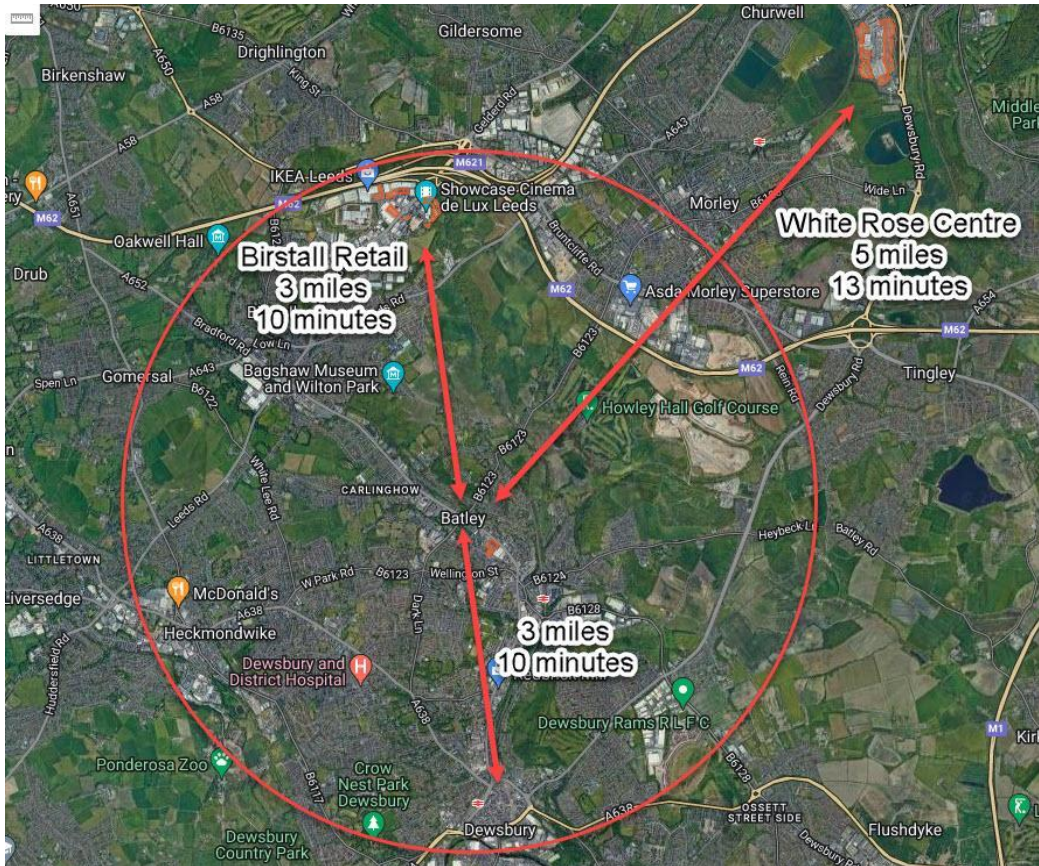
14. All parking is currently for fixed periods and carries the fear of a penalty fine. Parking charges are cheap but it is the fear of a penalty that is the main obstacle and has caused businesses to move out of the town.

15. The management of parking is perceived to be unnecessarily aggressive. (viz 'enforcement officers'). It is the perception that matters and needs to be changed if Dewsbury is to become "*..a destination town.*"
16. Regeneration in Dewsbury has already been negatively impacted by the known loss of the following businesses from the town.
 - a. Mark Betts, hairdresser and Chamber members - relocated to Batley.
 - b. Strawberry Fayre - florists relocated due to perceived harassment by parking attendants.
 - c. Guns 'n Roses, niche retailer gunsmith - relocated to Mirfield.
 - d. Jewellers - relocated to Ossett from Westgate.
 - e. Hallmark Jewellers - relocated to Ossett from Market Hall
17. The small number of locations (Railway Street & Rishworth Centre) allowing longer stays (9-12 hrs) appropriate to a day trip are not promoted. To use them you have to know about them in advance which is not the case for the visitors we aim to attract.
18. Developers are known to be demotivated from further investment in Dewsbury due to the failure of the council to engage with their concerns.
19. Dewsbury is part of the North Kirklees conurbation but is the only town with parking charges. This has a negative effect on customer decision making, business owner attitudes and developer decisions on business investment all of which are influenced by this situation which acts as a brake on development.

Dewsbury at a competitive disadvantage

Dewsbury is the principal town of North Kirklees and located at the southern extremity of the conurbation of some 175,000 people. North Kirklees is connected north and south by the Bradford, Halifax and Leeds roads, all converging on Dewsbury.

This was the original attraction of Dewsbury as a focal point of the local area. However, with purpose built retail sites at the other end, those roads can carry people away from Dewsbury just as easily as towards it.



For the residents of the northern half of North Kirkles it is the same distance or less from their home to the retail park at Birstall as it is to Dewsbury. At the retail park they will find large premises of a full range of niche retailers of national brands - plus free parking.



Free parking - Birstall retail park at J27

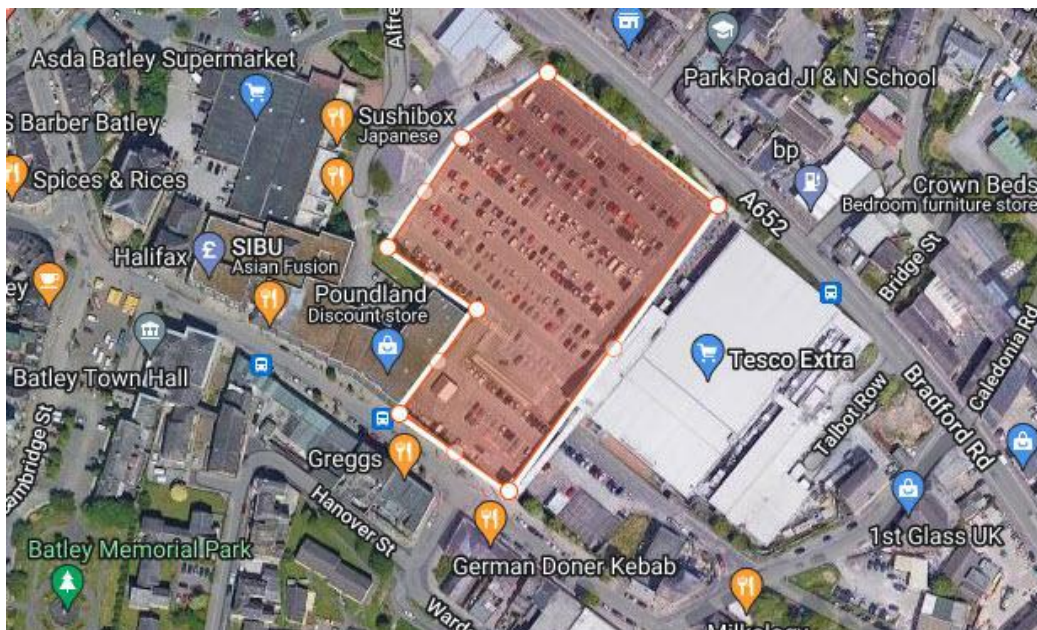


If they prefer the shopping mall experience then the White Rose Centre is 13 minutes and 5 miles away (measured from Batley again, a mid point in North Kirklees), offering a wide range of national brands - and free parking.

Free parking - White Rose Centre

In addition to these major retail developments sited, as they are, specifically to attract the customers of North Kirklees, the traditional urban experiences of Wakefield, Huddersfield and Leeds are easily accessible.

Local entrepreneurs wishing to open outlets in Dewsbury to serve the local community find that the same service is available throughout the towns of North Kirklees - with free parking.



Free parking - Batley

Despite being described as the principal town of North Kirklees, Dewsbury is hobbled in its efforts to compete within its own catchment area by a contradictory parking policy

Needs

From the numerous problems identified the needs to be addressed can be summarised as:

1. Remove the competitive disadvantage
2. Develop a strategy for Dewsbury that has multiple solutions to support the TIP objectives:
 - a. Encourage short visits e.g. the quick shop
 - b. Encourage long dwell time both for work and leisure visits, e.g. events, socialising, business employees.
 - c. Support the night time economy
 - d. Communicate a welcome to make Dewsbury a 'destination town'.
3. Provide options for different types of users:
 - a. Visitors - short and long term - including rail commuters into Leeds, Huddersfield and Manchester using Dewsbury to "Park and Ride"
 - b. Businesses - increased visitor dwell time increases spending.
 - c. Town centre residents - to support the Living Town strategy

Proposals

1. **Resolve the anomaly** of why Dewsbury, the principal town of North Kirklees, pays parking charges while other towns in North Kirklees do not. This is not understood by local businesses or residents.

It would be in accordance with Kirklees policy to develop a solution specifically for Dewsbury.

(Kirklees Economic Strategy 2019-2025 p40 *"Using a forward looking, **place based approach** to revitalising and promoting centres across Huddersfield, North and South Kirklees to celebrate our district's diversity".* . The council should either apply parking charges in other North Kirklees towns - which would obviously lead to an outcry from the rest of North Kirklees, or relieve Dewsbury of this burden.

2. **Encourage short visits.** While free parking throughout the town is attractive, the Chamber recognises the difficulties created by the limited number of on-street spaces and the need to make space available for as many visitors as possible.

On-street spaces should be free for one hour as currently applied in Batley (currently charged as 45 or 90 minutes). These spaces would still need machine tickets and attendants in order to provide the evidence of start/end times and should not be extendable as per the current policy. For simplicity, the free period should be uniform at 1 hour throughout the town.

N.B. Wakefield has experimented with free parking and has recently extended 2 hours free parking for the foreseeable future.

- 3. Encourage long visits** by making the **main car parks of Railway Street and Cliffe Street free and without penalties**. Cliffe Street, in particular, has over capacity to the extent that it is scheduled for residential development in the Local Plan. The planned closure of the car park serving the Market into which £15 million pounds is being invested is not understood by Chamber members and needs an explanation.

Making the major car parks free and penalty free has multiple benefits:

- a. Sends a clear message that Dewsbury is open for business.
- b. Removes the perception of unfairness against Dewsbury
- c. Encourages long 'dwell time' by visitors to support the cultural strategy of the TIP and the 'Attractiveness' strategy of the Strategic Development Framework of 2018.
- d. Encourages businesses currently parking in the town centre to use the council car park to achieve cost savings of more than £1,000 per year.
- e. Every space vacated by a business is an extra space for visitors.
- f. Particularly for visitors to events in the new entertainment space in the refurbished Market Hall.
- g. And gives the council leverage for more robust enforcement of waste regulations. (cars no longer parked in ginnels where commercial waste skips should be stored)
- h. Reduces living costs for low wage/part time workers particularly in the retail and service industries. These are often young mothers who must maintain flexible transport by car to meet family requirements and can see hours of their earnings every day consumed by parking charges.

(N.B. with rapid implementation both c and g can be presented as part of the council's efforts to reduce living costs at a time of rapidly increasing inflation)

- i. Promoting free car parking in the main car parks to rail commuters would release more capacity at the station car parks while encouraging a short walk every day in support of the Active Travel policy.
- j. The walk for rail commuters to/from Cliffe Street runs directly past the Market and Corporation Street, the retail heart of town therefore encouraging purchasing en route.
- k. Removes pressure on the parking available in the Minster for Minster events.
- l. There are a number of small, private car parks in the town centre which provide a good income to their owners without any cost or development risk. This creates an obstacle to development. Providing free car parking elsewhere would **devalue these sites and may motivate their owners** to more productive use in the regeneration process.
- m. Where 'reassignment of parking spaces' is quoted as a consequence of changes in TIP Business Cases the reality is that this is not possible with a finite, small number of on-street parking spaces. Making parking free in off street car parks provides a ready solution.

The only negative to free parking is the loss of council revenue. While this difficulty is recognised, the Chamber believes that the council will generate more revenue in the long term by encouraging a thriving local economy that generates value-uplift (a key metric in the TIP Business Cases) and more revenue from other sources while supporting regeneration.

Cliffe Street, in particular, serving the Market and the north of the town centre currently has considerable over capacity. As the local economy recovers, this and Railway Street car park will begin to fill up. Easily measured increased use will quickly provide evidence that the strategy has a positive effect.

- 4. Support the night time economy.** The last major change to the town centre was when local councillors delivered the pedestrianisation of Market Place to create a quiet space in the town centre. The TIP now brings change on an even greater scale and requires that we think again about present arrangements.

The new Town Park adjacent to the Town Hall removes from Market Place the function of being the major open space in the town centre used for pop-up events or just sitting and chatting.

The properties around Market Place are the natural location for restaurants, pavement cafes and other evening entertainment venues. We have the beginning of this development in Emojies and the Black Bull both of which have benefited from substantial public investment.

We therefore have the opportunity to retain the advantages of pedestrianisation during the day while having Market Place contribute to the night time economy by

providing parking during the evening. While not an attractive use this could possibly be ameliorated by creative use of combined dividers with seating, statuary and planters. This could provide a focal point of movement and activity which is known to deter criminality and would provide a sense of security for users.

In the meantime there is no reason to delay support for the existing businesses that have invested in the town but are currently struggling. Market Place currently makes no contribution to the life of the town in the evenings and we propose that Market Place be reconfigured as a pedestrian area during the day and as a car park to support the evening economy after 6pm.

Car parking is commonplace for town centre spaces across the country when not in use for other purposes as communities seek to obtain maximum value from the space available to them.

Such a change would encourage the existing businesses while indicating to future developers that the area has the potential to become a focal point for restaurants and cafes.

The potential of Market Place is currently being held back. Two prime sites have recently been lost to amusement arcades. These are unattractive to the demographic we wish to attract and this needs to be addressed with more robust planning approval processes.

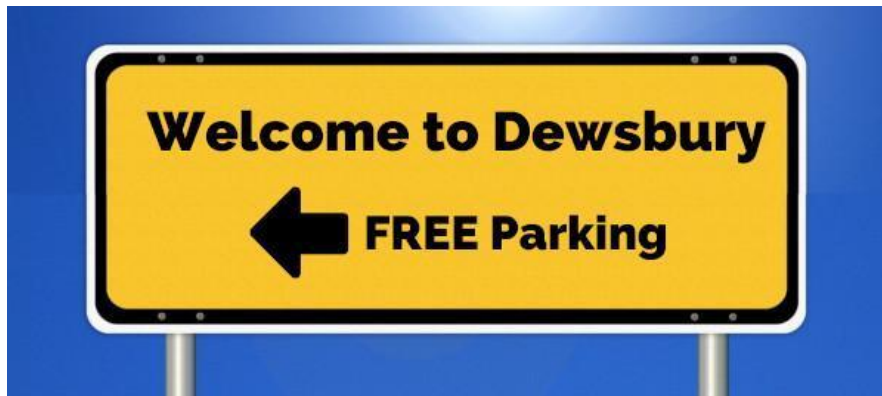
The very presence of businesses of this type serves to perpetuate a single person demographic that we are aiming to reduce whereas our objective is to promote family activities which will inevitably arrive by car. Family groups and the businesses that attract them need to be encouraged.

5. Say 'Welcome' - it works wonders



If it works for them....

- a. Large signs at all ring road junctions with a 'Welcome to Dewsbury' sign and directions to FREE Parking.



..it should work for us!

- b. Ensure that the car parks including trees and plantings are well maintained.
- c. Provide clear signage, particularly to Cliffe Street.
- d. Ensure the Active Travel strategy for the town integrates with the car parks with safe, secure walkways and lighting.
- e. Integrate the car parks into the Town Bus route to ensure that the elderly and infirm are not excluded.
- f. Review how the Sharpe Street/Battye Street gateway to Dewsbury can be improved.
- g. Change the current purpose and attitude of the parking attendants. At present this appears to be entirely negative by way of enforcement and ticketing that is perceived to be aggressive.

Rebrand the attendants to a more supportive name and make it their principal task to respond whenever possible with a positive message including advising users of the best place they can park and for what reason - even when they are moving them on.

Enforcement and ticketing should remain as one of their powers but should be perceived as a last resort.

- h. Review all parking regulations with a view to taking advantage of any opportunity for flexibility. e.g. is rigid enforcement necessary after 6pm?

6. Town centre residents. The Living Town strategy calls for residential development with the intention of attracting residents with disposable income. If no provision is made for car ownership this will limit residents to single and/or low income people with no car whereas the objective is to develop quality homes attractive to families or individuals with disposable income - which inevitably includes cars.

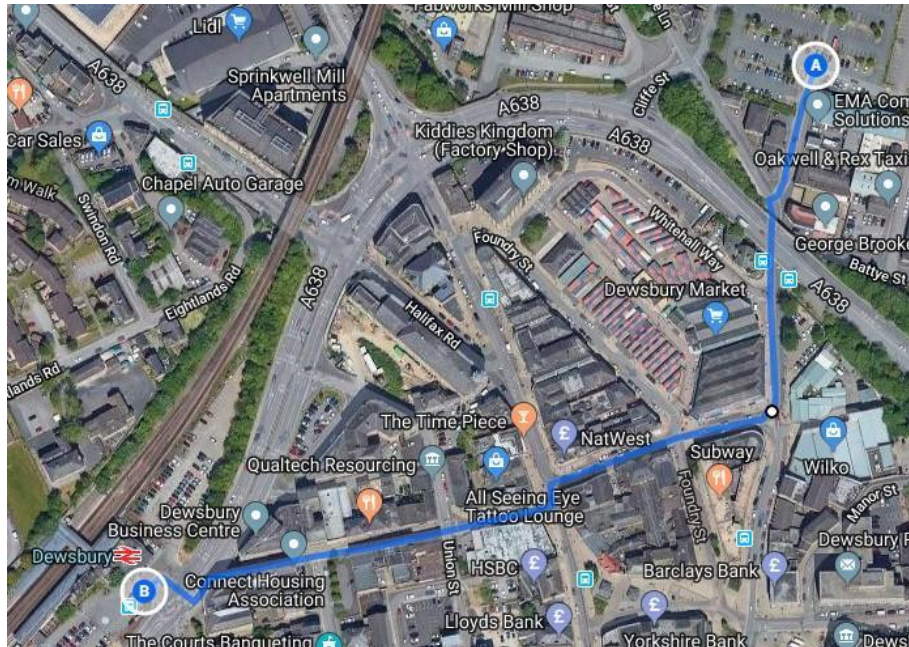
Residents choosing the urban lifestyle must accept that it is not always possible to have convenient car parking as well. However, there is no reason for such residents

in flats to be disadvantaged compared to a house owner with a resident parking area outside their front gate for which they pay a £15 annual fee.

We propose that flat owners within the ring road should pay the annual fee and then be able to park without restriction in any of the Dewsbury off street car parks.

This will provide a parking arrangement that developers can offer to potential residents suitable to make Dewsbury an attractive place to live and supporting the Living Town strategy.

- 7. Out of town rail traveller parking.** It is known that some commuters on the Leeds-Huddersfield-Manchester line drive from Leeds to Dewsbury to park before taking the train because Dewsbury parking charges are cheaper than Leeds.
- As long as there is spare capacity we should market Cliffe Street to these potential users as the lowest cost Park & Ride destination. They can then use the free town bus or the short, 8 minutes walk to connect to the station.
 - This would release the already limited parking in the station car parks for genuine Dewsbury commuters.
 - Provide a clearly signposted pedestrian route integrated into the town's Active Travel network to the station down Crackenedge Lane and Corporation Street. This will bring them right past the market and through the heart of the town centre.



An 8 minute walk

Perceptions matter

There are penalties attached to all the available parking options in Dewsbury. This generates a negative perception of the current situation and the town which needs to be addressed if Dewsbury is to become '...a destination town'.

The town centre is ringed by supermarkets with free parking for several hours which demonstrates that professional retailers understand the need for free parking close to their premises. And their free parking is time limited for the same reason as the on-street parking is limited, to ensure that shoppers move on when they finish their shopping in that store to make room for the next shopper.

But Dewsbury wants to encourage people to stay longer and we need an option that enables people to do so without fear.

Adopting unlimited free parking in the major off-street car parks would send a strong message that Dewsbury offers a welcome to everyone. Maximising use of Cliffe Street adjacent to the Market provides direct support for the TIP investment projects of the Market and the Arcade. Free use of Railway Street would maintain a consistent policy and would also support the Minster as it attempts to develop more activity without spending staff time controlling access to the limited parking available in the Minster grounds.

Offering a welcome, improving signage and making the car parks look good may appear minor issues but they all go to making residents and visitors feel good and perceive the town in a good light when they visit Dewsbury - which is our intention.

The High Street Report of Dec 2018 recommends that councils review parking in order to avoid erecting barriers to visitors. Cliffe Street, while closest to the major retail locations we want to support, is not the most convenient location and also suffers from being located on a hill. Railway Street is also distant from the town centre and is effectively competing with the retailer's own car parks.

However imperfect they may be, they are a means by which the council can influence visitor behaviour in Dewsbury. It is not the quantity of parking in Dewsbury that is in question nor the level of charges but of making the most effective use of what we have available. Any surplus capacity is a resource that should be used to make the town more attractive for the benefit of it's businesses, residents and visitors.

Urgency

Dewsbury has little to attract visitors to the town. We have lost almost all niche retailers. We have a good selection of cafes but very few restaurants that encourage people to stay a while compared to other North Kirklees towns. We have yet to build up the programme of events and festivals described in the TIP Vision statement.

We are in the midst of a cost of living crisis, the likes of which haven't been seen for two generations. Through a more imaginative approach of the sort outlined in this paper,

Kirklees could clearly support the cost of living agenda, making it easier and cheaper for local people to shop locally, encouraging them to make shorter trips, saving fuel costs and reducing pollution. At the same time it will be supporting local businesses who are struggling with the same inflationary pressures.

While there is much work taking place and major investments planned in an attempt to change this situation, we cannot wait to develop more attractions before removing every possible obstacle that affects visitors' decisions as to whether they visit Dewsbury or go somewhere else. There is no time for any delay in dealing with this problem. We need to start now.

Summary

Encouraging visitors both to visit more and to spend longer periods in town during those visits is the principal strategy of the Town Investment Plan - but the present approach to parking is contradictory and frustrates these objectives.

In addition to the conditions facing other run down towns, Dewsbury has the anomaly that it is the only town of North Kirklees where parking is chargeable. This immediately makes it unattractive and is a situation that is not understood by any of the local stakeholders.

Many of the problems facing Dewsbury are difficult and costly to solve as evidenced by the current cost inflation and subsequent delays to investment projects. But adopting these recommendations now to make Dewsbury a more attractive destination is quick, relatively cheap and consistent with national thinking on regeneration.

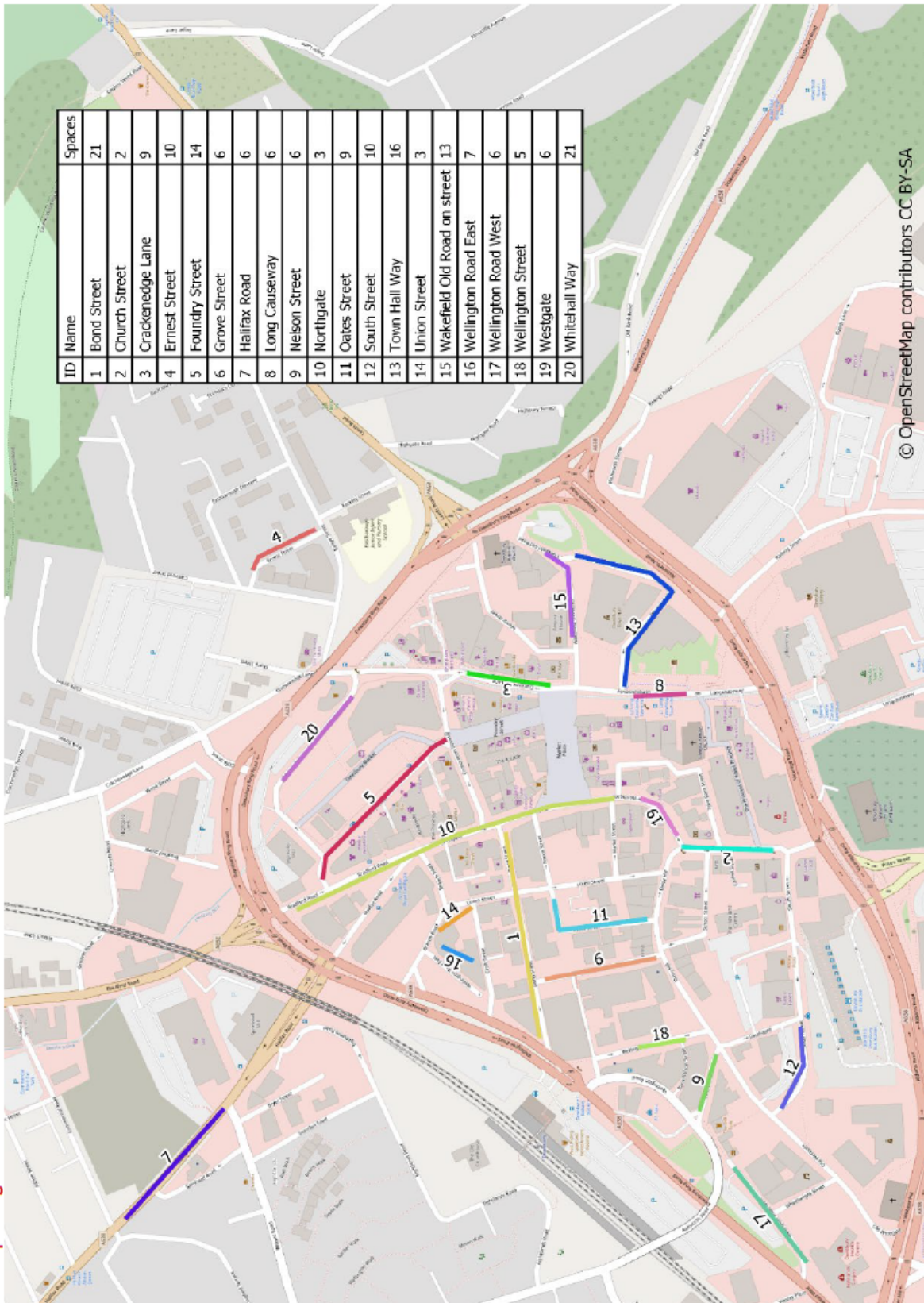
Most of the changes can be made within existing organisation structures and budgets, should not require additional external funding and should be implemented as a matter of urgency. The impact will be easily measured.

Above all it will give a clear message to business, residents and visitors that Dewsbury is not just talking about regeneration but actively doing something about it.



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Appendix A - On street parking in Dewsbury



Appendix B - Off Street Parking in Dewsbury



Appendix C - Parking charges 1 of 2

ON STREET	Max Stay	30 mins	45 mins	1 hr	1.5 hr	2 hrs	3 hrs	4 hrs	5 hours	1 day (8am-2pm)	6 hrs	7 hrs	8 hrs	9 hrs	10 hrs	11 hrs	12 hrs	
Bond Street (84147), Dewsbury	on		£0.50	£1.00	£1.00													
Church Street (84148), Dewsbury	on	£0.50																
Crackenedge Lane (84149), Dewsbury	on		£0.50	£1.00	£1.00													
Ernest Street (84146), Dewsbury	on	5							£2.00									
Foundry Street (84150), Dewsbury	on		£0.50	£1.00	£1.00													
Grove Street (84151), Dewsbury	on		£0.50	£1.00	£1.00													
Halifax Road (84152), Dewsbury	on		£0.50	£1.00	£1.00													
Longcauseway (84153), Dewsbury	on		£0.50	£1.00	£1.00													
Nelson Street (84154), Dewsbury	on		£0.50	£1.00	£1.00													
Northgate (84155), Dewsbury	on		£0.50	£1.00	£1.00													
Oates Street (84156), Dewsbury	on		£0.50	£1.00	£1.00													
South Street (84157), Dewsbury	on		£0.50	£1.00	£1.00													
Town Hall Way (84158), Dewsbury	on		£0.50	£1.00	£1.00													
Union Street (84159), Dewsbury	on		£0.50	£1.00	£1.00													
Wakefield Old Road (84160), Dewsbury	on		£0.50	£1.00	£1.00													
Wellington Road East (84163), Dewsbury	on		£0.50	£1.00	£1.00													
Wellington Road West (84161), Dewsbury	on		£0.50	£1.00	£1.00													
Wellington Street (84164), Dewsbury	on		£0.50	£1.00	£1.00													
Westgate (84165), Dewsbury	on		£0.50	£1.00	£1.00													
Whitehall Way (84166), Dewsbury	on		£0.50	£1.00	£1.00													

