

Whitby Park Car Park Consultation Findings Report

Background to the consultation

Whitby Park is the principal green space in Ellesmere Port, providing the opportunity for outdoor exercise, family picnics, participation in sporting activities and dog walking. It also has lots of facilities for young people and it regularly hosts community events as well as the local parkrun every Saturday morning. The car park is free to use and currently there is no restriction on the length of time a vehicle can be parked in its car park.

Traffic surveys have shown, however, that the car park is at or close to capacity on weekdays when the car park is dominated by long-stay parking, and the survey results show a typical pattern of commuter parking. On a Saturday, except for a morning peak linked to the local parkrun, the car park it is at about half capacity as long-stay demand is less.

The Council wants to deter non-park and non-leisure users from parking for lengthy periods. It wants to protect the park for its intended use by making access easier for users of the park and users of the other leisure and recreational facilities on site.

The Council carried out a consultation on a proposal to introduce a four-hour limited stay on the car park from Monday to Friday, between 8am and 6pm.

How the consultation was carried out

The consultation was open to all and ran for eight weeks from 6 February until 2 April 2024. There were multiple ways in which stakeholders could share their views.

Engagement methods included:

Online engagement	An online questionnaire using SmartSurvey
Social media	Facebook messaging
Events	Drop-in sessions at the Porto Theatre on 6 March 2024 (10am to 4pm) and 12 March 2024 (6pm to 8pm)
Engagement toolkit	eNewsletters for dissemination to: Council staff, Trade Unions and Peoples Panel Equality and Disabled access groups network Contact Centre Business and community networks
Engagement document	Detailed information and questionnaire available online and in hardcopy.

The consultation was proactively promoted and distributed to as many stakeholders as possible before the pre-election period for the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner election that began on 18 March, restricting the Council's approach to publicity. All active promotion of the consultation had to stop at this time.






In all, there were 434 contributions online, ten people or organisations responded by email, and 19 people or organisations took part in drop-in sessions.

Key messages

- More people disagreed with the proposal compared to those who agreed
- Slightly more users of other leisure facilities on site agreed with the proposal than disagreed.
- Among those who disagreed with the proposal, the key message was that it will be detrimental to people parking to go to work (too costly to park elsewhere)
- Among those who agreed with the proposal, the key message was that park users should have priority for parking spaces and long stay parking makes it difficult to visit the park/events due to lack of available spaces.

Summary of consultation findings

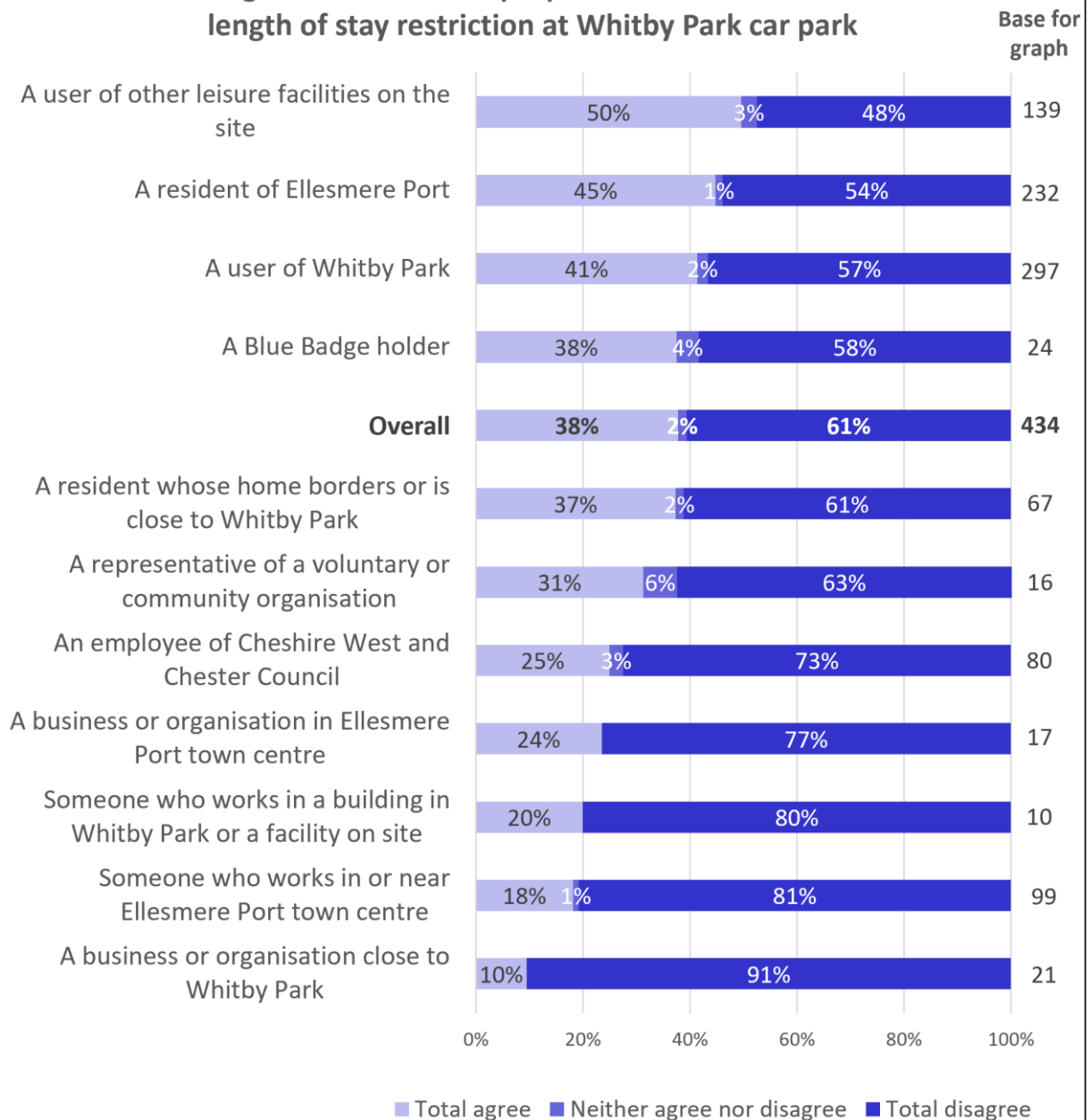
Respondents were asked...

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following proposal for Whitby Park car park? To introduce a four-hour length of stay restriction at Whitby Park car park, Ellesmere Port, which would apply between 8am and 6pm, Monday to Fridays excluding Bank Holidays				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Strongly agree		29%	124
2	Agree		9%	40
3	Neither agree nor disagree		2%	7
4	Disagree		10%	42
5	Strongly disagree		51%	221

Overall, 38% of respondents agreed (29% strongly agreed and 9% agreed) with the proposal, while 2% neither agreed nor disagreed and 61% disagreed (10% disagreed and 51% strongly disagreed).

The graph below compares the level of agreement with the proposal for different types of respondents. Across all types of respondents, more people disagreed with the proposal than agreed, with the exception of 'users of other leisure facilities on the site', for which the level of agreement and disagreement was broadly similar (50% agree, 48% disagree).

Level of agreement with the proposal to introduce a four-hour length of stay restriction at Whitby Park car park



**Respondent numbers are shown to the right of the bars. Please note that these do not sum to the overall figure, as people could select more than one option. Results are only displayed for respondent categories with 10 or more respondents. Where numbers of respondents drop below 50, percentages need to be interpreted with caution.*

Level of agreement with the proposal to introduce a four-hour length of stay restriction at Whitby Park car park by respondent type

Overall (434 respondents) 38% agreed with the proposal, 2% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 61% disagreed.

A user of other leisure facilities on the site (139 respondents); 50% agreed, 3% neither agreed nor disagreed, 48% disagreed. A resident of Ellesmere Port (232 respondents); 45% agreed, 1% neither agreed nor disagreed, 54% disagreed. A user of Whitby Park (297 respondents); 41% agreed, 2% neither agreed nor disagreed, 57% disagreed. A Blue Badge holder (24 respondents); 38% agreed, 4% neither agreed nor disagreed, 58% disagreed. A resident whose home borders or is close to Whitby Park (67 respondents); 37% agreed, 2% neither agreed nor disagreed, 61% disagreed. A representative of a voluntary or community organisation (16 respondents); 31% agreed, 6% neither agreed nor disagreed, 63% disagreed. An employee of Cheshire West and Chester Council (80 respondents); 25% agreed, 3% neither agreed nor disagreed, 73% disagreed. A business or organisation in Ellesmere Port town centre (17 respondents); 24% agreed and 77% disagreed. Someone who works in a building in Whitby Park or a facility onsite (10 respondents); 20% agreed and 80% disagreed. Someone who works in or near Ellesmere Port town centre (99 respondents); 18% agreed, 1% neither agreed nor disagreed, 81% disagreed. A business or organisation close to Whitby Park (21 respondents); 10 agreed and 91% disagreed.

Level of agreement for each respondent type compared to the overall level of agreement

The graph above shows that the level of agreement with the proposal was slightly higher than the overall level of agreement for respondents who were 'users of other leisure facilities on the site' (50% agree, 48% disagree), 'residents of Ellesmere Port' (45% agree, 54% disagree) and 'users of Whitby Park' (41% agree, 57% disagree).

The level of agreement and disagreement was broadly similar to the overall level for blue badge holders (38% agree, 58% disagree) and 'residents whose home borders close to Whitby Park' (37% agree, 61% disagree).

The level of disagreement was higher than the overall level of disagreement for 'businesses or organisations close to Whitby Park' (91% disagree, 10% agree), 'someone who works in or near Ellesmere Port town centre' (81% disagree, 18% agree), 'someone who works in a building in Whitby Park or a facility on site' (80% disagree, 20% agree), 'businesses or organisations in Ellesmere Port town centre' (77% disagree, 24% agree), and 'employees of the Council' (73% disagree, 25% agree).

Key messages from comments received

Respondents were asked to explain the reasons for their answers. Survey and drop-in respondents gave 652 comments.

The key messages from the respondents who disagreed with the proposal included:

- The most important reason to respondents was that this will be detrimental to people parking to go to work (too costly to park elsewhere)
- Some respondents were concerned that this will discourage visitors/new businesses from setting up in the town centre/affect traders.
- Some people expressed that measures are not necessary, there are always spaces available in the car park.
- Some respondents said this will encourage on-street parking in the surrounding area.

- Some also expressed the view that four hours is too short a time for some park users/volunteers.
- Some respondents stated that other car parks are often full.
- Some people were concerned this will restrict the time that people can use the park and facilities within it.
- Some people expressed the view that other free car parks are too far away.
- Some respondents were concerned that the displaced long stay cars could cause the other car parks to quickly become full.
- Some people stated the need more free parking in Ellesmere Port in general.

The key messages from the respondents who agreed with the proposal included:

- Many people commented that park users should have priority for parking spaces.
- Many respondents expressed the view that long stay parking makes it difficult to visit the park/events due to lack of available spaces.
- Some respondents stated that at present, the car park is mainly used by town centre workers who should use an alternative.
- Some people commented that long stay parking limits spaces available for free, short stay town/clinic/library visits.
- Some people agreed that four hours is a sufficient length of time for a park visit/short town visit.

The key messages from the respondents who neither agreed or disagreed with the proposals included:

- A suggestion to make the length of stay restriction longer
- A suggestion to allocate part of the car park for a length of stay restriction.

Respondents were also asked if there were any ways in which they thought the proposal could be improved. Survey and drop-in respondents gave 464 comments. The key messages from these comments included:

- Do not go ahead with proposal at all.
- No improvements to suggest.
- Make all car parks free/cheap.
- Introduce 'free parking' passes or cheap season tickets for town centre workers.

Actions taken as a result of the consultation










The feedback from the consultation will form part of a report to be presented to the Director of Environment and Communities who, in consultation with the Director of Transport and Highways and the Cabinet Member for Planning, Homes and Safer Communities, to inform a decision on whether to implement the proposal.

Appendix 1 - Proposal for Whitby Park Car Park

Introduce a four-hour maximum stay from Monday to Friday, between 8am and 6pm at the car park to protect the facility for users of the park.

Appendix 2 – Profile of respondents

Respondent type

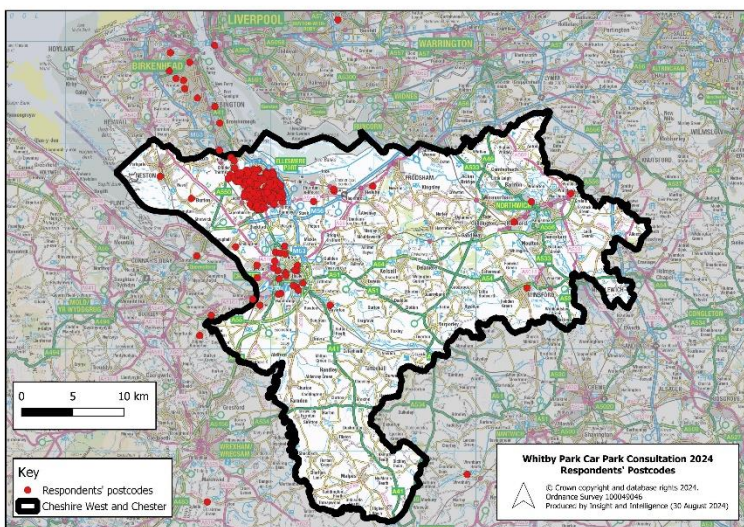
4. Are you responding as...? (Please select all that apply)				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	A user of Whitby Park		68%	290
2	A user of other leisure facilities on the site (eg Porto Theatre, café, bowling green, other clubs etc.)		33%	138
3	Someone who works in a building in Whitby Park or a facility on site		2%	10
4	A resident whose home borders or is close to Whitby Park		16%	66
5	A resident of Ellesmere Port		54%	229
6	A business or organisation close to Whitby Park		5%	20
7	A business or organisation in Ellesmere Port town centre		4%	16
8	Someone who works in or near Ellesmere Port town centre		23%	97
9	A Blue Badge holder		6%	24

4. Are you responding as...? (Please select all that apply)

10	An elected Member of Cheshire West and Chester Council		0%	2
11	A local Town or Parish Councillor		0%	2
12	An employee of Cheshire West and Chester Council		19%	80
13	A representative of a voluntary or community organisation		4%	16
14	Prefer not to say		1%	4
			answered	424
			skipped	3
Other (please specify) (23)				








Postcode of respondents

The map below shows all of the postcodes given by respondents that could be mapped (279 postcodes). 261 respondents lie within the Cheshire West and Chester boundary and 18 lie outside, with a large number around the Ellesmere Port area.






Age

8. Which age group do you belong to? (Please note that if you are aged under 16 you need the permission of a parent, guardian or teacher to take part in this survey).

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Under 16 (please provide the name or email address of your parent/guardian/teacher below)	0%	0
2	16 - 24 	4%	15
3	25 - 34 	15%	62
4	35 - 44 	21%	86
5	45 - 54 	21%	89
6	55 - 64 	24%	101
7	65+ 	10%	43
8	Prefer not to say 	5%	22
		answered	418
		skipped	9
If you are aged under 16, please provide the name and email address of the parent/guardian/teacher consenting to you taking part in this survey: (2)			

Long-term illness, health issue or disability

9. Do you have a long-term illness, health issue or disability that limits your daily activities or the work you can do?

Answer Choices		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes 	14%	59
2	No 	75%	309
3	Prefer not to say 	10%	43
		answered	411
		skipped	16

10. If you answered 'yes' please indicate which of the following applies to you?
 (Please select all that apply)

Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Physical impairment that causes mobility issues, e.g. wheelchair user		25%	20
2	Visual impairment		3%	2
3	Hearing impairment		14%	11
4	Learning disability or difficulty		1%	1
5	Mental Health issue		19%	15
6	Long standing illness or health condition		46%	36
7	Prefer not to say		32%	25
			answered	79
			skipped	348
Other (please specify): (18)				