



**Downham Market Town Council
Public Consultation Results
June 2016**

ALPHA

PARKING



Contents page

Section	Title	Page no.
1.	Background and Project Objectives	2
2.	Alpha Parking	3
3.	Consultation Approach	4
4.	Results	5
5.	Conclusion	15
6.	Appendix	16

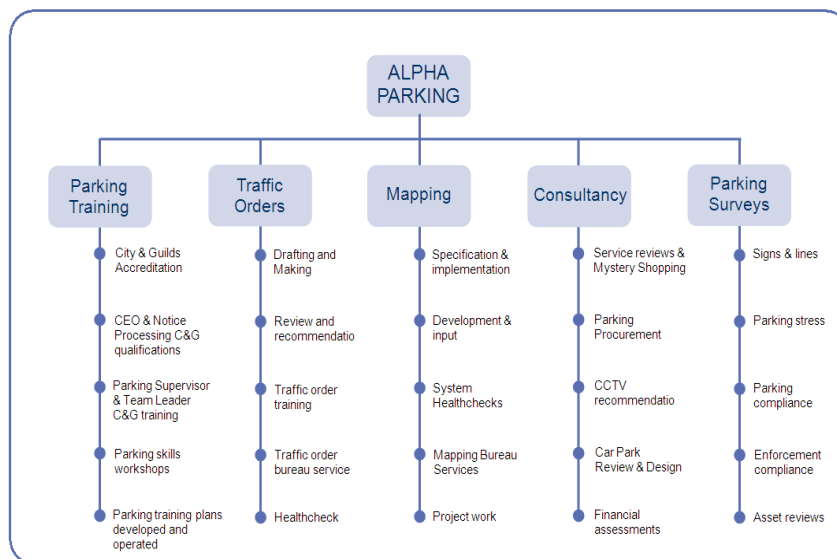
1. Background and Project Objectives

- 1.1 Downham Market is an attractive market town in Norfolk which attracts visitors because of both a large agricultural hinterland and its position on the main railway line into London.
- 1.2 Traditionally, the council car parks have been provided without charge in order to supply a service to the residents and encourage visitors. However, the increase in vehicle usage combined with the rise in the number of visitors and commuters and plans to double the number of direct trains to London have meant that parking demand has risen and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future.
- 1.3 The Town Council are actively seeking to manage the parking situation and commissioned a report from Alpha Parking, a specialist parking consultancy, to recommend a strategy going forward. A range of recommendations were contained in the report and, after considerable deliberation, the Town Council favours moving ahead by:
 - Introducing charging and enforcement in the car parks
 - Supplying the first hour of parking without a charge
 - Outsourcing management of the car parks to a specialist contractor while retaining ultimate control of tariffs and strategy.
- 1.4 In order to assess the public reaction to these recommendations the Town Council have commissioned Alpha Parking to carry out an initial public consultation. This report describes the approach to this consultation and the results.



2. Alpha Parking

2.1 Alpha Parking is a specialist parking consultancy that has been working within the UK parking industry for more than 10 years with a wide local authority client base. We have experienced in-house teams covering the areas shown in the diagram below.



2.2 Our experienced team are used to carrying out consultations of all types relating to parking and to analysing and reporting on the data.

2.3 We work mainly for local authorities throughout the UK and, as an example, have recently completed a public consultation relating to Resident's Parking Zones in Bury St Edmunds for St Edmundsbury Council.

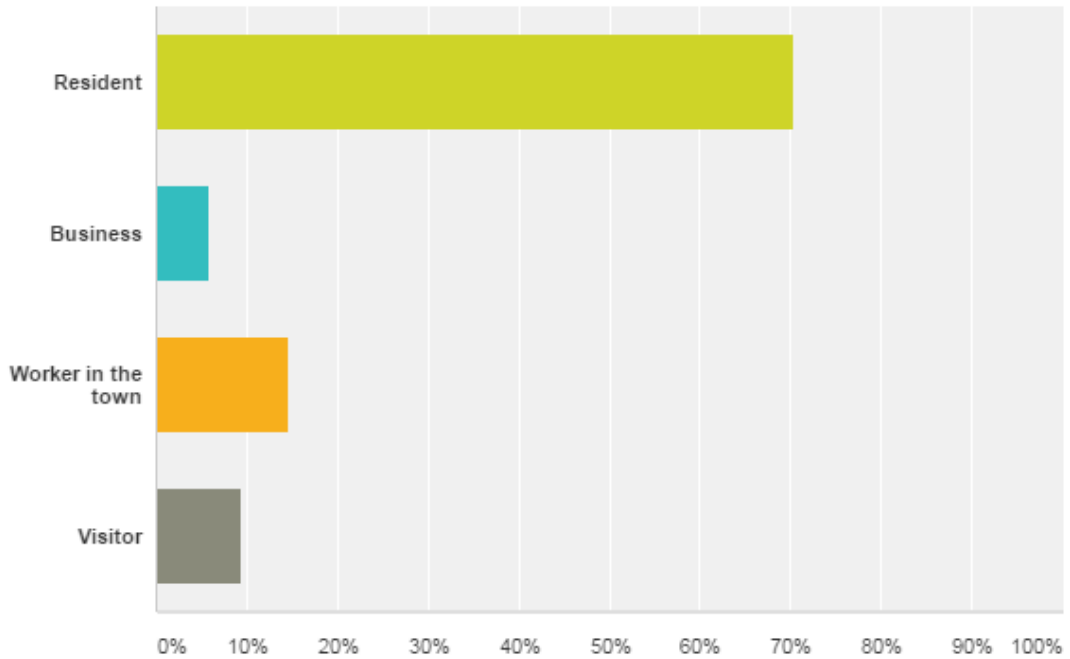
3. Consultation Approach

- 3.1 A short questionnaire was drafted by Alpha Parking and discussed with the Town Council. A copy of the final questionnaire is shown as an appendix to this report.
- 3.2 A Focus Group meeting for major stakeholders was run by Alpha Parking on Monday 18th January from 11.00am. This provided discussion on the overall proposals and introduced the questionnaire.
- 3.3 A public consultation was arranged for Monday 18th January in the Town Hall from 3.00pm to 7.00pm. This was facilitated by two of Alpha Parking's experienced consultants and attended by Councillors and Council officers.
- 3.3 The consultation times and venues were widely publicised by means such as notices around the town, the local press and the local radio.
- 3.4 Alpha Parking provided information in hard copy at the consultation venue and also made four short presentations to explain the Town Council's preferred approach. In between these presentations the two Alpha Parking Consultants were available to discuss the issues and suggestions with the public.
- 3.5 Comment Books were at the consultation where the public could record their views. These were analysed by Alpha Parking and the results are included below
- 3.6 The public were asked to complete and return the questionnaires either at the meeting or by returning the questionnaires to the Town Council. All questionnaires had to be returned by the end of January. Extra questionnaires could be obtained from the Council Office.
- 3.7 Involvement in the consultation was very good with the Focus Group Meeting attended by about 25 stakeholders and approximately 300 attending the consultation.
- 3.8 We are aware that some photocopies of the questionnaire were made by the Council and are not sure of the exact number distributed but believe it was around 250. We have had 172 questionnaires completed which is a very pleasing return level of 68%.

4. Results

Which of the following best describes you?

Answered: 172 Skipped: 0

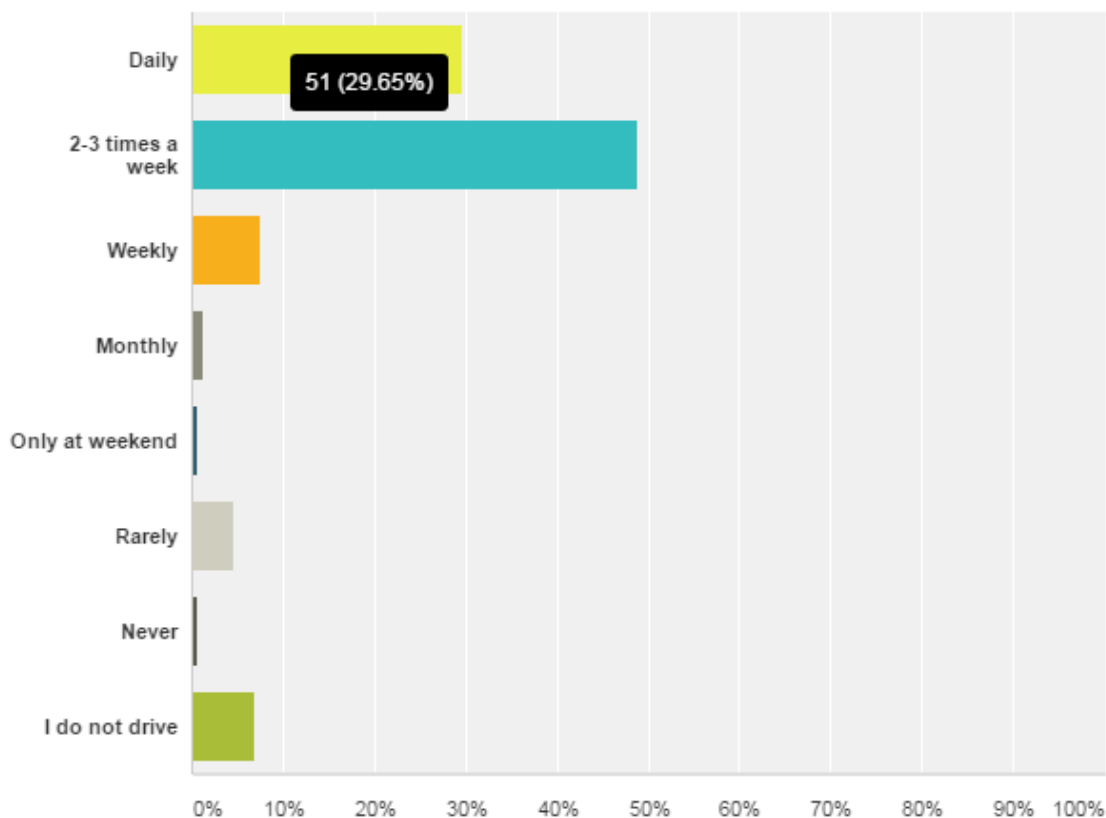


Answer Choices	Responses
Resident	70.35% 121
Business	5.81% 10
Worker in the town	14.53% 25
Visitor	9.30% 16
Total	172

It is encouraging that such a high proportion of the responses were from appropriate users of the town facilities.

How often do you park in the town?

Answered: 172 Skipped: 0

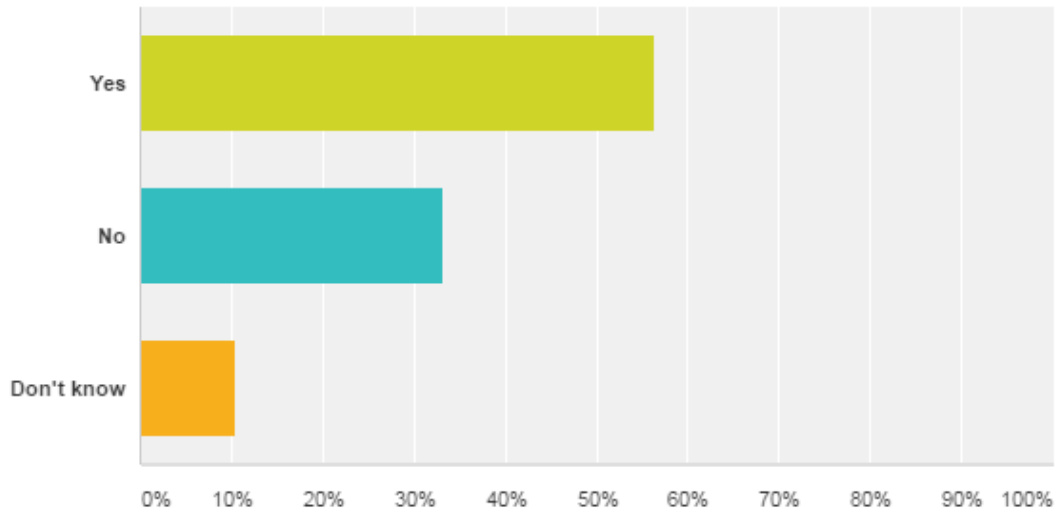


Answer Choices	Responses
▼ Daily	29.65% 51
▼ 2-3 times a week	48.84% 84
▼ Weekly	7.56% 13
▼ Monthly	1.16% 2
▼ Only at weekend	0.58% 1
▼ Rarely	4.65% 8
▼ Never	0.58% 1
▼ I do not drive	6.98% 12
Total	172

While it is important that a high level of the consultations are returned by users of the town parking facilities it should be born in mind that parking impacts everyone, even those who do not drive.

Do you agree that changes need to be made to the Downham Market approach to managing the parking in the town?

Answered: 172 Skipped: 0

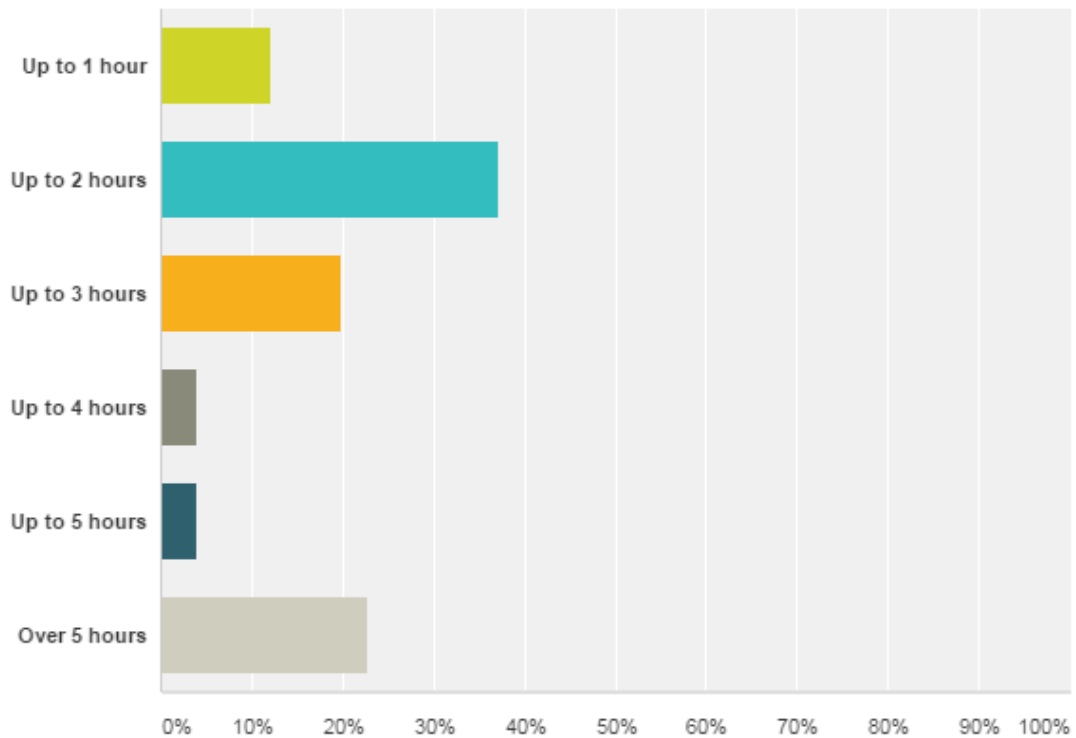


Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	56.40% 97
No	33.14% 57
Don't know	10.47% 18
Total	172

This result shows that there is a 23% majority for there to be changes to the parking in the town before taking into account the 10.47% of “don’t knows”

When visiting Downham Market Town Centre what is the average time you spend on a single visit in any single month?

Answered: 172 Skipped: 0

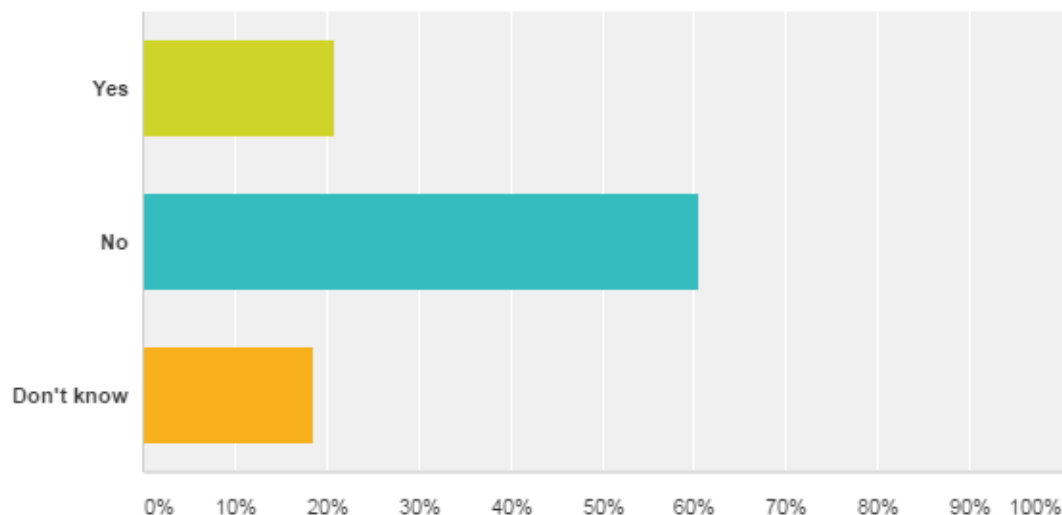


Answer Choices	Responses
Up to 1 hour	12.21% 21
Up to 2 hours	37.21% 64
Up to 3 hours	19.77% 34
Up to 4 hours	4.07% 7
Up to 5 hours	4.07% 7
Over 5 hours	22.67% 39
Total	172

The current proposal is for the first hour of parking to be free; there was considerable support at the consultation for this to be extended so that the first two hours are free. This question response that this would exclude a very large section of parking cars from charges and indicates it may have detrimental financial impact.

Do you agree with the Town Council's recommendation to outsource operational management of the car parks?

Answered: 172 Skipped: 0

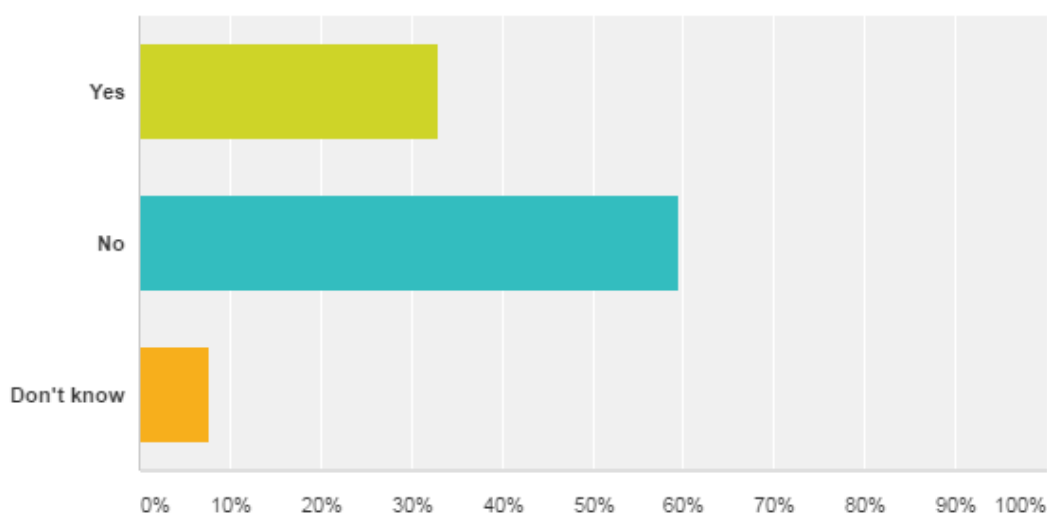


Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	20.93% 36
No	60.47% 104
Don't know	18.60% 32
Total	172

This is a common reaction to any outsourcing suggestion as the public tend to fear that an outsource provider will be uninterested in their concerns and objectives. The Council would need to ensure that they had appropriate management tools specified in the contract and that they employed an active contract management approach.

Do you agree with the Town Council's recommendation for providing "free" parking for the first hour with parking charges for stays over 1 hour, with enforcement to ensure compliance, (outside the charing periods Monday to Saturday 08:00hrs - 18:00hrs all parking will be free)

Answered: 170 Skipped: 2

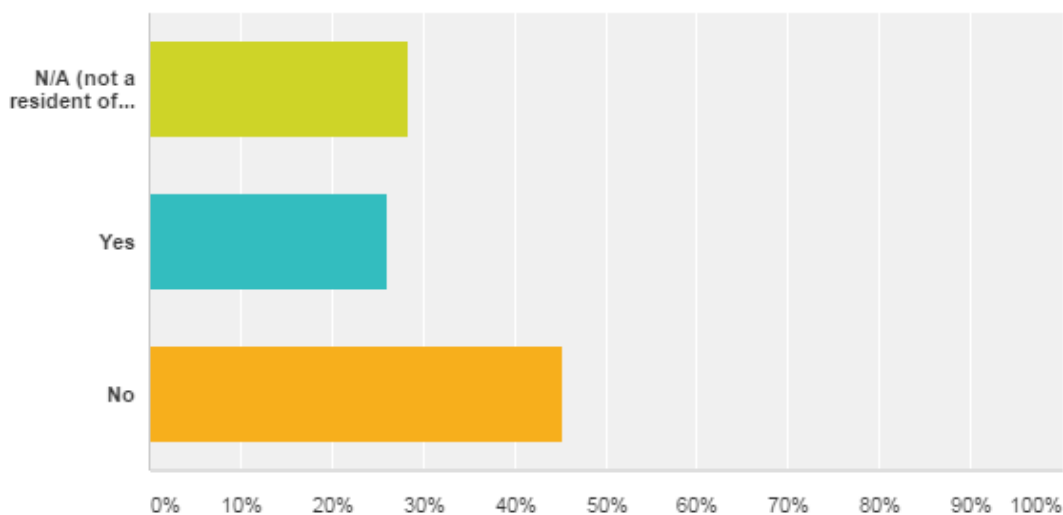


Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	32.94% 56
No	59.41% 101
Don't know	7.65% 13
Total	170

At first sight this seems like a clear rejection of the Council's proposals; however it should be viewed in relation to the high support, noted in the "comments" reaction and by those attending the consultation, for a longer period of free parking beyond the 1 hour allowance.

If you are a Downham Market resident or business are you prepared to pay an additional amount for the maintenance of the town's car park?

Answered: 172 Skipped: 0

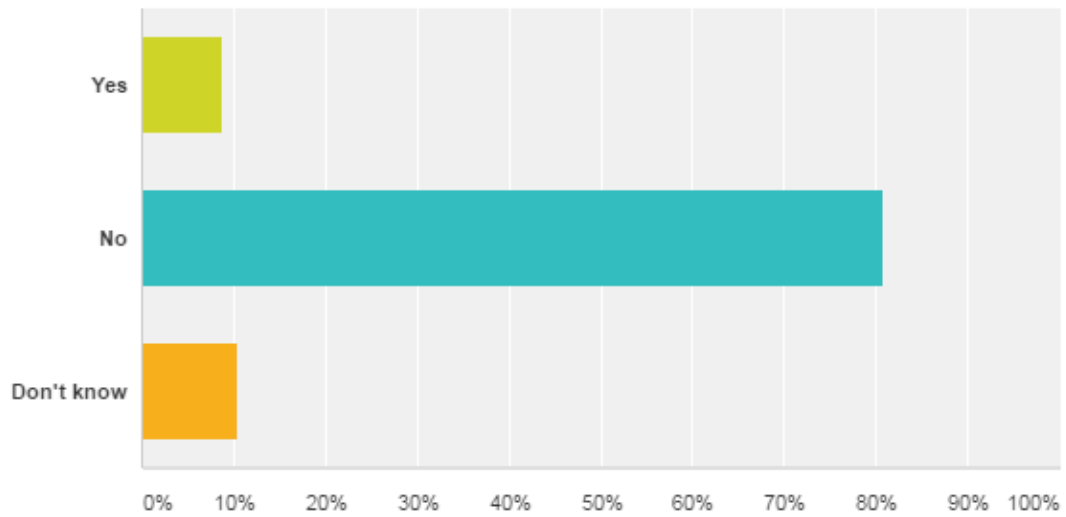


Answer Choices	Responses
N/A (not a resident of business)	28.49% 49
Yes	26.16% 45
No	45.35% 78
Total	172

It is interesting, but perhaps not surprising, that people are not prepared to make any extra payment to help maintain the car parks. If this is the case then charging of some type for using the facility is the only method to gather the appropriate income.

Do you believe that Downham Market should be providing free car park spaces to motorists who leave their cars so that they can travel outside the town?

Answered: 172 Skipped: 0

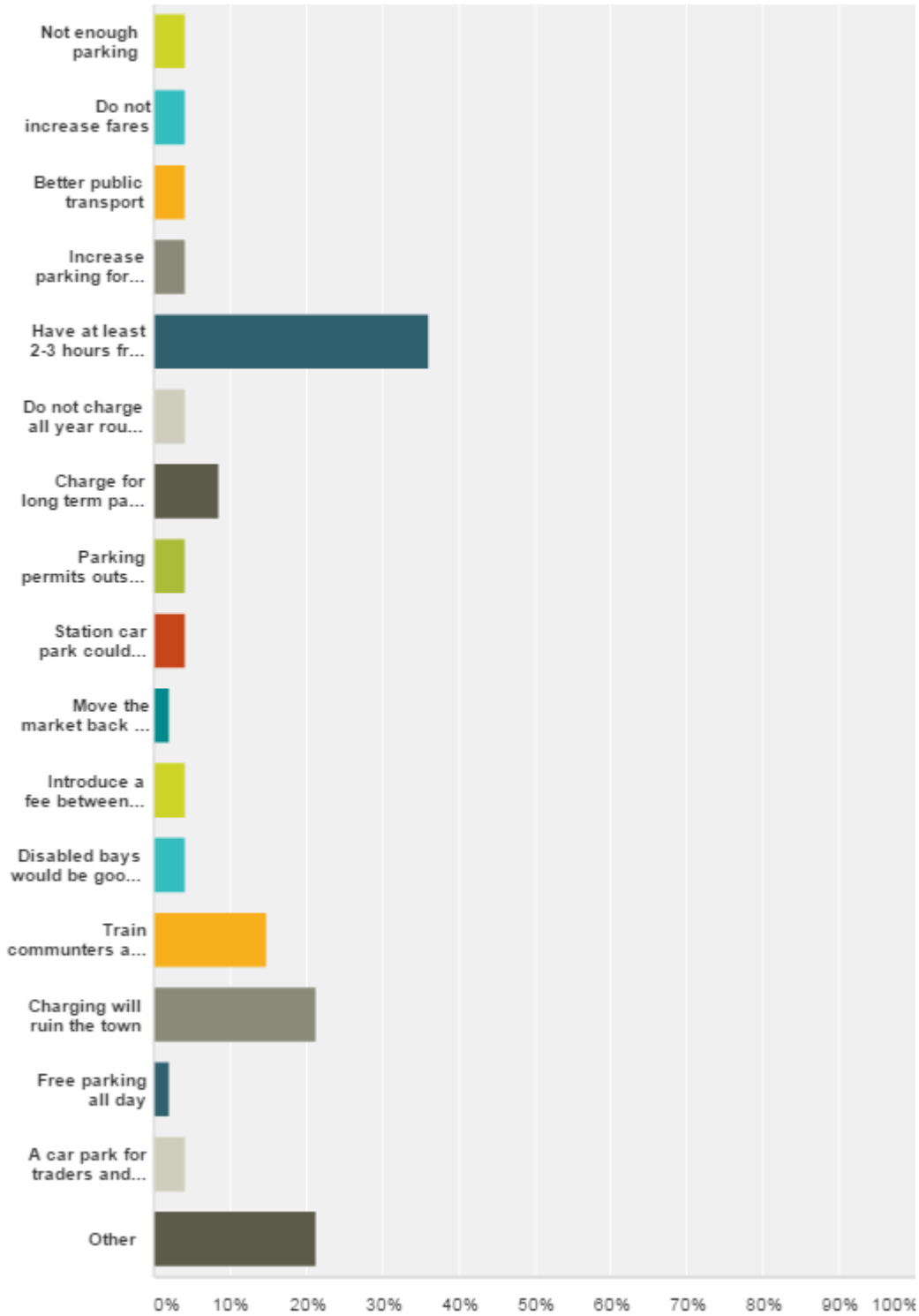


Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	8.72% 15
No	80.81% 139
Don't know	10.47% 18
Total	172

It is useful to have this clear and emphatic response even though it is probably not a surprise

Comments

Answered: 47 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
▼ Not enough parking	4.26%	2
▼ Do not increase fares	4.26%	2
▼ Better public transport	4.26%	2
▼ Increase parking for paying customers - more than 8 hours	4.26%	2
▼ Have at least 2-3 hours free parking not 1 hour	36.17%	17
▼ Do not charge all year round in Hollie Car Park	4.26%	2
▼ Charge for long term parks e.g. commuters	8.51%	4
▼ Parking permits outside homes	4.26%	2
▼ Station car park could easily have more spaces	4.26%	2
▼ Move the market back to Old Square	2.13%	1
▼ Introduce a fee between 4am-8am for commuters	4.26%	2
▼ Disabled bays would be good near the centre	4.26%	2
▼ Train commuters are the problem	14.89%	7
▼ Charging will ruin the town	21.28%	10
▼ Free parking all day	2.13%	1
▼ A car park for traders and giving them permits will reduce pressure	4.26%	2
▼ Other	Responses	21.28% 10
Total Respondents: 47		

It is interesting to see the analysis of the comments and, as was suggested earlier, the very high emphasis on a longer period of free parking is a useful indication of why the Council's approach received a negative answer.

It is to be noted that the next highest comment was against charging.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The consultation was successful in involving the public and receiving a very good response rate.
- 5.2 It is clear from the response levels and the answers to the questionnaire that there is a widespread and deep public concern about parking issues in Downham Market.
- 5.3 In order to maintain and manage the car parks and so provide a service to the public an income stream will be required by the Council. The options for obtaining this are either to obtain it from the car park users via a parking charge or to increase the levy on all the Council residents and businesses. The latter option was clearly rejected within the questionnaire.
- 5.4 There was a negative response to the question on supporting the Council's policy but other questionnaire and verbal responses indicate that this relates mainly to the number of hours offered as free parking rather than the overall policy.
- 5.5 Unfortunately, applying two hours free parking may well have a detrimental financial impact on the current strategy recommendations.



6. Appendix

DOWNHAM MARKET CAR PARKING MANAGEMENT STRATEGY CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

To ensure that your questionnaire gets counted please supply your name and address

Contact Details

Address 1:

Address 2:

Town/City:

Postcode:

1. Which of the following best describes you?

- Resident.....
- Business.....
- Worker in the town.....
- Visitor.....
- Visitor.....

2. Why are you in the town today?

- Live in the town.....
- Carrying out businesses.....
- Worker in the town.....
- Shopping
- Leisure.....



3. How often do you park in the town?

- Daily
- 2-3 times a week
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Only at weekends
- Rarely
- Never
- I do not drive

4. When visiting Downham Market Town Centre what is the average time you spend on a single visit in any single month?

- Up to 1 hour.....
- Up to 2 hours.....
- UP to 3 hours.....
- Up to 4 hours.....
- Up to 5 hours.....
- Over 5 hours

5. Do you believe that Downham Market should be providing free car park spaces to motorists who leave their cars so that they can travel outside of the town, preventing town users from using them?

- Yes.....
- No.....
- Don't Know.....
- Visitor.....
-

6. Do you agree that changes need to be made to the Downham Market approach to managing the parking in the town?

- Yes (please complete the following questions)
- No (thank you for your help, there is no need to complete the following questions)



7. Downham Market Town Centre car parks are being used for commuter parking. Motorists are leaving their vehicles for long periods. and preventing

- 8. Yes.....
- 9. No.....
- 10. Don't Know.....
- 11. Visitor.....

8. Do you agree with the Town Council's recommendation for providing 'free' parking for the first hour, with parking charges for stays over 1 hour, with enforcement to ensure compliance, (outside the charging periods Monday to Saturday 08:00hrs to 18:00hrs all parking will be free)

- Yes.....
- No.....

9. If you are a Downham Market resident or Business are you prepared to pay a supplement or some other fee for the maintenance of the towns car parks in order that you and others can use them?

- Yes.....
- No.....

10. As a resident/ business of Downham Market which one of these would you prefer?

- To continue to pay for the maintenance of the car parks owned by Downham Market and accept an associated increase in the Council Tax Bill
- or
- Have the costs paid through another service



Please pass your completed questionnaire to an official

Thank you for your attendance and the time you have taken to fill in this questionnaire

Thank you.

