

## **DIAL West Cheshire raises concerns regarding the Council's parking strategy proposals**

DIAL West Cheshire says that a good level of accessible parking is vital to encourage disabled and older people to use the borough and are concerned that one of the proposals in the Council's parking strategy is to reduce the number of blue badge parking bays to below the national standard in some Council car parks. The charity argues that the loss of any parking options will impact on disabled and older people considerably and it is crucial that the overall number of blue badge parking spaces do not fall below recommended national standards in any location.

For Chester city, this loss of parking options is particularly concerning in the light of the Council's plans to expand pedestrianisation, which will displace existing on-street blue badge parking, reducing options further.

Another option in the Council's parking strategy, to introduce charges for blue badge parking, is also the wrong approach as disabled visitors have little choice about whether or not to use a car or which car park to use. It is imperative that disabled people can continue to use their blue badge for free parking (up to four hours), as this will enable them to access the borough. The charity points to the fact that, on average, disabled people have lower incomes compared to non-disabled people, and are far less-able to afford parking charges.

Notably, the charity feels that there could be major repercussions if the proposed changes are implemented, not least the lower take-up of Shopmobility Services across the borough. Not only will this act as a deterrent to disabled and older people who want to be socially active in the borough, but it will also have a detrimental effect on the sustainability of the charities which run the services and significantly impact on the business, retail and visitor economies in Cheshire West & Chester.