

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD**

**3 December 2012**

**Report of the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matter for Recommendation to Borough Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)**

**1 PARKING ACTION PLAN**

**Summary**

**This report updates Members on the phased approach to on-street parking management with a focus on the detail of the current initiative – West Malling Local Parking Plan Review.**

**1.1 West Malling Local Parking Plan Review**

- 1.1.1 The West Malling Local Parking Plan was the first of the 14 plans now in place across the Borough. It is the first to be revisited so that it can be adjusted, as necessary, in the light of any changes to the local parking environment or to address deficiencies that have become apparent since the plan was first adopted in 2004.
- 1.1.2 Since then, we have also carried out some important work that has been beneficial for the town. We purchased the freehold of the Ryarsh Lane car park land. This included some additional land that allowed us to extend the car park from 100 to 124 spaces. More recently, in response to request from the local Chamber of Commerce, the time at which free non-permit use of the car park starts was reduced from 4pm to 3pm.
- 1.1.3 In overall terms and given the obvious parking tensions and capacity issues and constraints that occur in a vibrant historic town, the parking plan provisions have relatively worked well.
- 1.1.4 Earlier this year we undertook this planned review of parking working closely with the West Malling Local Parking Plan Steering Group. The Steering Group comprises local County and Borough Members, the Parish Council and the Chamber of Commerce, and is chaired by the Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation.

**1.2 Scope of the Review**

- 1.2.1 Based on representations we had received from the Parish Council and the Chamber of Commerce, the central focus of the review has been the need for an appropriate balance between the short and long-stay parking requirements in the Town. The public consultation considered concerns about misuse of the short stay car park by people staying more than the stated maximum permitted time of four hours, what we can do to resolve a perceived shortfall in long stay car parking capacity and where possible identify some fresh opportunities.
- 1.2.2 These key points set the scope of the review. Importantly it indicated that the major exercise completed in 2004 had settled down quite well and the broad schedule of what was introduced had achieved a reasonable balance across the competing local parking needs. As a result, this was an exercise involving fine adjustments to what is already broadly in place albeit with a major focus on a lack of long-stay parking and the associated effect on short-stay parking.
- 1.2.3 The results of the public consultation were considered by the Steering Group at a meeting earlier this month.

### **1.3 The Public Consultation Response**

- 1.3.1 Considering first the replies to the questionnaire, the overall response was as follows:

- Leaflets distributed in the town - 1280
- Number of replies received – 141
- 11% response

- 1.3.2 There were an additional 15 replies from people living elsewhere generated by the questionnaires distributed through local shops and the windscreen leafleting exercise.

### **1.4 On-street Proposals**

- 1.4.1 One of the key objectives of the review was to create some additional on-street spaces for long-stay permit parking.
- 1.4.2 The on-street suggestions in the consultation exercise focussed on solutions to parking problems by providing additional on-street capacity at the following locations in the town:
- Water Lane
  - St Leonard's Street
  - Town Hill and Neville Court

1.4.3 The Steering Group's recommended approach for each of these locations is shown on the drawings in **Annexes 1, 2 & 3** which have subsequently been adjusted to reflect feedback from the community which is summarised below.

## **1.5 Water Lane**

1.5.1 The proposals for Water Lane are in effect a formalising of the parking that already takes place so those consulted in the immediate area are not faced with any real change on the ground. What is significant in parking management terms is that the spaces are intended for use by people working in the town rather than what currently takes place. There is some observational evidence that spaces are being taken up by train commuters and by people going to the Country Park. Both of these have adequate, albeit paid for, parking so there is benefit in terms of parking management in the town in controlling these spaces for some of the overflow from the short stay car park if measures are adopted to remove the long stay parking from the High Street car park. The response to the consultation was as follows:

- Number of forms/plans distributed – 44
- Number of replies - 8

1.5.2 Within this modest response no significant issues were raised and this element of the consultation can be readily recommended for approval. The important caveat is that it should be accompanied by an extension of the permit system to cover workers in the town to allow the spaces to contribute to the long stay capacity of West Malling.

## **1.6 St Leonards Street**

1.6.1 The additional information sent to premises in St Leonards Street sought views on proposals to create a series of formally marked lengths of additional parking. This would be needed to cater for overspill from the High Street car park if measures are introduced there to deal with the long stay car parking currently taking place. The additional 25 or so spaces that could potentially be created are consequently a critical part of the overall package of measures.

- Number of forms/plans distributed – 39
- Number of replies - 16

1.6.2 Four of the replies supported the proposals. Eleven were not in favour. Most of those not in favour came from residents of Douces Manor and these were prompted by concerns about sight lines along St Leonards Street from the entrance to Douces Manor. It is not absolutely essential to provide all the lengths of parking outlined in the consultation plans and there is scope for adjustment of the detail to address the residents' concerns.

- 1.6.3 There is a further reason why parking should be seriously considered in St Leonards Street. Every so many weeks the High Street is closed while the Farmers' Market takes place. When this happens there is a substantial amount of parking in St Leonards Street. It is entirely unregulated and it creates considerable difficulties for both residents and those visiting the market. Formalising the parking would help bring a degree of order when people are using St Leonards Street as overspill parking for the town while the market takes place.
- 1.6.4 With the proviso about adjusting the proposal to meet the resident's concerns (the revised drawing DD/561/3 is in **Annex 3**); the proposals for St Leonards Street are recommended for approval.

## **1.7 Town Hill & Nevill Court**

- 1.7.1 The final area where it was considered some additional on-street parking could be created to provide long stay capacity was in Town Hill.
- Number of forms/plans distributed – 71
  - Number of replies - 21
- 1.7.2 Three replies supported the proposals while 18 indicated that they did not. In parallel with the consultation response some residents also recorded their opposition in the form of a petition. It should also be noted that members of the Steering Group themselves had some reservations about this element of the consultation. However, they recognised that the imbalance between the demand for long stay parking and the current capacity in the town made it essential that all opportunities should be examined. For this reason, it was included in the consultation so that the local community had an opportunity to express its views on it.
- 1.7.3 As it is, the responses received make it clear that any formal stage of statutory consultation on the proposal or even an adjusted one is likely to generate an overwhelmingly negative reaction from those in the immediate neighbourhood. For this reason, the Steering Group would like the Town Hill element of the package of measures be removed from further consideration.
- 1.7.4 The proposals for Nevill Court still have some merit, as there are already commuter / long-stay parking issues in the road. Some commented that they thought that Nevill Court was private. However, the road is adopted and there were a number of comments from residents about long-stay parking and that residents should be given precedence.
- 1.7.5 The Nevill Court element of the proposals are recommended for approval.
- 1.7.6 The recommendations of the Steering Group for the on-street proposals are summarised as follows.

Location	Steering Group Recommendation
Water lane	Details set out on drawing no DD/561/1
Town Hill and Nevill Court	Details set out on drawing no DD/561/2  Note. Proposals for additional on-street parking on Town Hill were not supported in the informal consultation and are not being recommended by the Steering Group for implementation
St Leonard's Street	Details set out on drawing no DD/561/3

## 1.8 High Street Short-Stay Car Park

- 1.8.1 Clearly there are some local frustrations about the way the short-stay car park in the High Street is used and there is a view held by many that long stay parking here is restricting its capacity for short-term users. There are occasions when those wishing to park cannot find a space due to this low turnover and are forced to look elsewhere or perhaps return to park at another time. On balance this can be a deterrent to the detriment of local business and inconvenience to local people.
- 1.8.2 The consultation leaflet posed a question concerning the charging in the High Street short-stay car park. It invited comment on whether they thought that people using this car park should pay directly to do so in order to encourage more turnover, assist in enforcement to the same end and ultimately make the car park more accessible to shoppers and visitors to the town.
- 1.8.3 Currently enforcement within this car park is time consuming and an inefficient use of the Civil Enforcement Officer's time. The introduction of charging, as explained in the report to the Steering Group, would provide better and timelier opportunities to enforce the short-stay restrictions here. Although there was good support for charging from those who responded to the consultation, the Steering Group recommended that long-stay users should be encouraged to park in some of the additional on-street spaces at Water Lane, Neville Court and/or St Leonard's Street and that this should be implemented for a period to see if that initiative alone would make a difference in the use of the High Street Car Park. My view remains that a mechanism of charging is the most efficient way of managing and enforcing parking patterns, although I understand the cautious approach favoured by the Steering Group. The Parish Council and the Chamber of Commerce offered to contact businesses in the town and promote the alternative parking to their staff. This would seem to be an acceptable first approach at achieving compliance with the short-stay theme in this car park. However should

this not be effective then we will have to seriously re-consider introducing a charging regime to allow the Civil Enforcement Officers to effectively enforce the restrictions.

- 1.8.4 The Borough Council's financial challenges require that consideration be given to how costs can be abated across all service areas. Car parks require a revenue commitment to support the maintenance and rates. In addition, the costs of providing CCTV, much valued by the local community, are considerable. Car parks therefore cannot be isolated from these wider financial pressures and it is legitimate to consider whether direct users should contribute towards some of the cost of the facilities.
- 1.8.5 One important measure which should assist turnover the car park received overwhelming public support. This was the suggestion that the maximum stay should be reduced from 4 to 3 hours and the Steering Group recommends this approach. Tesco share the ownership of this car park and any decision will require their agreement. Initial discussions with them suggest that they would support this initiative and I recommend that this be endorsed and taken forward in consultation with Tesco.

## **1.9 Other Areas in West Malling**

- 1.9.1 Additionally the Steering Group recommends that consideration be given to the some other issues which arose during the consultation process:
- The introduction of permit parking in Offham Road and Norman Road to address concerns about displacement and obstructive parking.
  - There are ongoing concerns about a relatively recent problem relating to commuter parking on the A20 at the entrance to Leybourne Woods. This parking at this location has escalated following the resurfacing of the small parking area by KCC which seems to have triggered an awareness of the car park. Ideally Chalkwell, the commuter bus operator, would pick up its customers from a location where parked cars are not going to cause a problem. KCC has advertised a Traffic Regulation Order to promote waiting restrictions at this location to try and minimise the impact on the highway. However, I do not believe that to be the whole answer and so discussions are being held with KCC officers and Chalkwell to identify and potentially promote alternative suitable parking opportunities elsewhere on the A20 which would remove the nuisance of the commuter parking blocking the woods car park, the grass verges and footways. This may be changed or extended to reflect the developing station car park 'kiss and ride' facility which may alter the parking usage on the A20.
  - A little further westward along the A20 between 267 and 283 London Road we have had a request to consider extending the Residents' Preferential Parking (RPP) on the footway in front of these residential properties. The

footway here is wide enough to cater for parked cars without obstructing passing pedestrians and is tolerated by KCC in recognition of this. Increasing pressure coming from commuters, new housing in the area, and use by Parkfoot garage customers is making it sometimes impossible for residents to use these spaces. I understand the residents of these properties are keen to join the RPP scheme and are aware that they would all need to pay the annual fee. I also understand that KCC has no objection in principle to the extension of the scheme to a pavement area.

- Tesco has asked that the loading bay in the High Street fronting their store start at 6am rather than the current 8am.

1.9.2 If the Board is minded to approve the Steering Groups recommendations that these additional areas are included in the review then these can be taken forward for informal consultation.

### 1.10 Other Parking Schemes in Progress

1.10.1 Details of some 40 locations forming Phase 6B, including the review of Zone M in Tonbridge, the introduction of a new residents parking area in the Market Quarter, plus the approved Local Parking scheme for Aylesford will be formally advertised over the next couple of months. Any sustained objections will be reported to the next meeting of this Board before these schemes are implemented. Members should note that this phase represents a very considerable amount of intervention in terms of parking restrictions.

### 1.11 Borough Green, Snodland and East Malling – Parking Reviews

1.11.1 These reviews are programmed to be undertaken shortly and contact will be made with local Members and Parish Councils to ensure we capture any relevant concerns.

### 1.12 Phase 7

1.12.1 We are currently compiling a list of locations for investigating the possibility of new parking restrictions. Currently the list of locations for consideration is as follows;

Parish or Ward	Location	Issue
Aylesford	The Beeches	Parking near the Surgery
Aylesford (Eccles)	Bull Lane (opposite No's 271-293)	Parking by weekend footballers' cars
Aylesford (Walderslade)	Woodbury Road (near No's 68 & 70)	Access problems for residents
Aylesford (Walderslade)	Tunbury Avenue & Walderslade Woods	Commuter parking issues
East Malling	Mill Lane	Changes to parking bays around access to No.33

Parish or Ward	Location	Issue
Aylesford (Ditton)	New Road	New disabled parking bay outside the Post Office
Wrotham	A20 (near Tower Ind. Est.)	Parking around the entrance to the industrial estate
Tonbridge (Higham)	Penn Way	Junction protection
Tonbridge (Higham)	Gainsborough Gardens	Access problems for large vehicles
Tonbridge (Medway)	Royal Avenue	Commuter/school parking
Tonbridge (Medway)	Goldsmid Road	Commuter parking
Tonbridge (Cage Green)	Whistler Road & Rutherford Way	Commercial vehicle parking
Tonbridge (Castle)	Dry Hill Park Road	Changes to parking bays
Tonbridge (Vauxhall)	Hilltop & Silver Close area	Commuter / school parking
West Malling	Offham Road, Norman Road, London Road (A20) between 267 & 283 and the A20 to the East of the junction with Town Hill	Commuter parking
Leybourne	Castle Way, Lillieburn and Bridgewater Place	Commuter & inappropriate parking

### 1.13 Future Phases

1.13.1 Following Phase 7 we are programmed to undertake an assessment of the current parking restrictions in Hadlow and an overall review of the requests and aspirations of the Parish Council.

### 1.14 Legal Implications

1.14.1 The on-street parking service is undertaken by the Borough Council on behalf of the County Council under the terms of the formal legal agreement.

### 1.15 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.15.1 Funding to implement the parking action plan is provided within existing approved Borough Council Budgets.

### 1.16 Risk Assessment

1.16.1 The assessment and consultation process applied to parking management should provide the assurance that the Borough Council has the will and ability to adapt the Parking Plans in the light of comment and circumstances to ensure that it achieves a best balance of local parking needs. A regular review of the schemes

is crucial to ensure that we can correctly and effectively manage on street parking in these areas as the proposals are either introduced for safety reasons or to provide a more appropriate balance of parking needs.

1.16.2 A major risk is that scheme proposals encounter significant lack of local support. This risk is mitigated by the considerable effort devoted to ensuring there is widespread consultation on proposals through two stages of informal consultation before any formal stage of consultation is reached. There is also care given to ensuring that schemes are adjusted and adapted in the light of comments and observations received from the local community without compromising safety of the Councils commitment to deal appropriately with identified safety concerns.

### 1.17 Equality Impact Assessment

1.17.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

### 1.18 Recommendations

1.18.1 The West Malling Local Parking Plan Steering Group's recommendations for:

- 1) the on-street proposals set out in this report **BE APPROVED**,
- 2) the development of additional on-street proposals set out in this report **BE APPROVED**
- 3) a further report **BE MADE** in 6 months time to further consider the use of the Short Stay High Street car park.

1.18.2 That the 'parking programme' as set out in Section 1.11, 1.12 and 1.13 **BE ENDORSED**.

The Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation, if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Mike O'Brien

Nil

Steve Humphrey

Director of Planning Transport and Leisure

<b>Screening for equality impacts:</b>		
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Explanation of impacts</b>
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against	No	All of the proposals are in line with national guidelines and re-iterates advice set out within the Highway Code. Any such parking that is

<b>Screening for equality impacts:</b>		
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Explanation of impacts</b>
different groups in the community?		affected by these changes is already contrary to that advice. There is no established right to park on the public highway, and the proposals all assist the maintenance of the right of access along the highway and to properties.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	Yes	The proposals should ease traffic movements and improve access to properties for all road users.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

*In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.*