

Newbury Parking Position Statement for OSMC

Introduction

There appears to be some misunderstanding about what OSMC are intending to review concerning parking in Newbury. The purpose of these notes is to set out the issues and clarify the position.

On-street Parking Issues

1. The introduction of on-street charging in Newbury was approved by Executive Member Individual Decision on 28th November 2013. This followed extensive public consultation that was part of the Council's savings proposals. There were two public consultations on this particular proposal. The first was the informal consultation between 21st January and 1st March 2013, the objective being to seek to understand the likely impact of charging for parking on certain streets and how the impact could be mitigated against. The second was the formal statutory advertisement and consultation between 25th July and 15th August 2013 on a modified scheme that took account of points raised by consultees during the earlier public consultation. There was a high volume of responses received to the first consultation but only 25 objections were received at the statutory stage.
2. The Executive Member Individual Decision was subsequently considered by OSMC on 21st January 2014 after being called in. The Commission resolved that the Executive Member Decision to approve the whole scheme be upheld and that consideration be given to a phased introduction to allow for further information about current usage of free parking in the very central areas of the scheme to be gathered before completion. It was agreed however that all of the pay machines needed for the whole scheme would be procured and this has been done. Phase 1 of the scheme was introduced at twelve locations on 23rd June 2014. Phase 2 of the scheme is smaller than Phase 1, consisting of only five locations. Usage surveys at Northbrook Street (west side), Broadway (east side) and Cheap Street (west side) were undertaken on 2nd, 4th and 6th June 2015 and the results are being collated. If we do not proceed with the approved scheme this summer we will run out of time on the parking legal order and have to start the process all over again. There are therefore no plans to refer on-street charging back to OSMC for further consideration.

Residents Parking Issues

3. The origins of the suggested scrutiny topic put forward by Tony Vickers when he was a councillor centred on his concerns about the availability of spaces for residents on-street and with new developments in Newbury that did not have sufficient parking spaces, which therefore reduced parking availability for residents even further. There is no argument with the sentiment here, but it is already being addressed as part of other considerations within the Council, specifically as part of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.

Residential Parking for New Development is a proposed Development Management Policy that went out to consultation in September 2014. Following comments received this is likely to be revised before a final version goes to Full Council in September 2015 for approval. The document will then go for examination in public and will be scrutinised by an independent inspector. This issue is therefore being fully scrutinised as part of the formal process being followed. It is difficult to see what merit there will be in OSMC undertaking a completely separate scrutiny process.

4. As part of the Council's Traffic Management Policies a "Residents' Parking Scheme – Policy and Guidance" document is being drafted. The existing Policy and Guidance document has not been revised for many years and so needs to be updated. This document could in theory be produced and considered by OSMC in isolation but it would not address the issue of new developments reducing availability for existing residents that can only be done through the Site Allocations Development Plan Document process. OSMC may therefore consider it best for officers to hold back on the update of this Traffic Management policy document and for it to be introduced at the same time as the planning guidance that will result from the Site Allocations Development Plan Document process. The disadvantage of this approach is that it is unlikely that the examination in public will be undertaken before next year.
5. Tony Vickers had previously claimed that there are currently hundreds of empty spaces at all times in the Council's Newbury town centre multi-storey car parks but there is a serious shortage of on-street parking spaces for town centre residents, such that if residents entitled to a permit in the town centre (and nearby) zones were to obtain one they could rarely find a space in which to use it within 400m of their homes. However there must be a clear distinction between the provision of a pay-to-park car parks service and Resident Parking Zones. The car parks exist to serve and service the business interests of Newbury, providing parking for workers, shoppers and visitors. It is true that there are some periods each day when there are plenty of spaces. In the daytime the car parks serve the entire business community of Newbury and in the evenings they mainly serve the food and leisure businesses of the town. When the daytime businesses close, the car parks are emptier and when the evening businesses close the car parks empty further.
6. It is not the case that there is a serious shortage of on-street parking spaces for town centre residents. In the W1 zone, which is our most challenging zone, there are more spaces than there are resident parking permit holders. If more residents chose to purchase residents parking permits and this put pressure on existing road space we could review the regulations in the streets concerned and if necessary expand the number of spaces for permit holders. In zone C1 there are more permit holders than spaces on-street in the central area of the zone. Resident parking permit holders are therefore permitted to park in the Council's West Street car park, free of charge, between 6.00 pm and 8.00 am if they can't find a space on-street. There are a total of nine parking zones in Newbury, eight of which have residents' parking spaces

available for use. These can be seen on the Newbury Parking Zones Map at Appendix A. There are more spaces than resident permit holders in all of the residents parking zones in Newbury, as can be seen in the spreadsheet at Appendix B.

7. This spreadsheet shows that demand doesn't exceed capacity and it has not therefore been necessary to include the potential for residents to use their permits in nearby off-street car parks because there are sufficient spaces available for the residents to use within the zones. It is accepted that it may not always be possible for them to park in their own street but they should be able to find a space in another street in the zone. Invariably the nearest car park will be more distant from their home than another street in the zone and it is therefore preferable to park in a nearby street rather than in a car park. Going forward there may be opportunities for similar dispensations for resident permit holders to use our car parks overnight should the need arise in a specific location but at present this is not necessary and it would need to be very carefully considered based on the merits of each case that arose. A blanket use of car parks by residents overnight would not be appropriate. The Northbrook multi-storey car park is only open from 7.00 am to 7.00 pm every day due to problems with security and vandalism so would not be suitable for residents parking use.

Parking Space Availability Issues

8. A survey of all available car parks was undertaken in October 2012. This included all Council car parks and privately operated car parks available for members of the public to use for their trips to Newbury. Consultants (WSP) were engaged to undertake a study to help with forecasting the future parking demand based on known developments. WSP manage the Newbury / Thatcham transport model for the Council and have all the committed developments and development outlined in the Core Strategy included in the model. The forecast year already built into the transport model is 2026 to fit with the end of the Core Strategy period. It made sense therefore for the same forecast year of 2026 to be used for this piece of work. Their report was completed in May 2013.
9. The conclusion of the study work undertaken by WSP was that while the town currently has ample parking available at present, by the time that the town centre developments are completed and we reach the end of the Council's Core Strategy period in 2026 the spare parking spaces in the daytime will amount to less than 5% of the total supply. However the locations of the spare spaces are not matched by the demand, with a substantial number of people having to travel up to 2km to find spaces and this will therefore have to be carefully managed going forward. In the evening, demand is heavily dependent on events taking place within the town centre. On evenings with heavy demand, the most convenient car parks will be full causing people to use spare capacity elsewhere in the town. This may not be as attractive for evening events potentially reducing the appeal of coming to Newbury for evening entertainment, so again will need to be managed carefully going forward. Extracts from the WSP report are reproduced at Appendix C. There

are a number of options to be considered to plan for adequate provision of parking in Newbury town centre by 2026. These include:

- opportunities to increase the parking stock
- improved access and signage to car parks with spare capacity
- bus priority measures on key corridors
- personalised travel planning at new and existing developments
- workplace travel planning
- improved cycle routes and parking facilities

Many of these measures would promote sustainable transport measures and reduce carbon emissions, thereby supporting key government policies and helping to deliver the Local Transport Plan goals. The study findings were reported to the Transport Policy Task Group in June 2013 and the Newbury Town Centre Task Group in July 2013.

10. It can be deduced from the findings of the WSP study work that it would not be appropriate to permit extensive use of the public car parks by residents because this would put further stress on parking provision going forward. It would also be logistically difficult to manage and enforce because residents could not be permitted between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm when parking demand for use by the business interests of Newbury and for providing parking for workers, shoppers and visitors is high. Similarly residents could not be permitted to use car parks located near to venues where there is high demand for parking during events in the central areas of the town between 6.00 pm and 8.00 am. If they were permitted to use car parks further out of the town centre the take up would be very low as residents will always want to park as close to where they live as possible. It would not really be appropriate to allow this use for the low numbers likely to be involved when, as stated above, it is not the case that there is a serious shortage of on-street parking spaces for town centre residents. It must be remembered that it would be far from convenient for residents to have to wait until after 6.00 pm to park in the car park and have to return to remove their car by 8.00 am the next day. This would further deter them from availing themselves of such a facility. There is of course no reason why residents can't park in one of our car parks after 6.00 pm and pay the £1.00 evening charge that would take them through to 8.00 am the next day. They could also top up this payment to take them beyond 8.00 am the next day by prepaying for whatever period they require. If they park in the pay on foot car parks they don't need to prepay as the amount due will be calculated when they place their parking ticket into the pay machine before they exit the car park. This option is already available and used by some of our customers and avoids any logistical or enforcement issues.
11. There is no evidence to support claims by some traders that Newbury's current parking charges deter visitors or shoppers or act as a disincentive to the Newbury retail trade. On the contrary parking numbers have continued to increase as the Country has moved out of recession.

Footfall

12. Footfall in Newbury was historically measured using a specialist company who undertook surveys on the Council's behalf from May 2003 until May 2013. The company undertook surveys at thirty count points in the town for a week, usually twice a year in May and October. They then used an algorithm to ascertain the footfall for a week based on six hour counting periods. The data for this ten year period is shown at Appendix D and reveals that there is no cause for concern and nothing to suggest that parking charges had any significant impact on footfall.
13. Since October 2014 the collection of footfall data has been undertaken by Newbury BID. The BID use a single counter situated in Northbrook Street that monitors pedestrian flows constantly at all times. The data is reported monthly and can be seen at Appendix E. This data shows the fluctuations that occur month on month due to high footfall events such as Christmas and Easter holidays. It does not inform the impact of parking matters on footfall however. The data will be more useful when information is available for months in 2015 that can be compared with those for 2014.

Conclusions

14. It will be apparent that there is a considerable amount of work already being carried out on Newbury town centre parking related issues and policies that is being overseen by various Governance Groups and Task Groups. The policy in relation to new developments in Newbury that do not have sufficient parking spaces is being finalised in preparation for consideration by Full Council in September 2015 as part of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document "Residential Parking for New Development" that will go for examination in public and will be scrutinised by an independent inspector.
15. There are also a number of parking matters that the Council are already committed to completing such as the final phase of the on-street charging scheme after completion of the usage surveys and in due course the management of the issues arising out of the WSP study as we move towards 2026.
16. OSMC could consider the "Residents' Parking Scheme – Policy and Guidance" document that is being updated as part of the Council's Traffic Management Policies but it would not address the issue of new developments reducing availability for existing residents that can only be done through the Site Allocations Development Plan Document process. OSMC may therefore consider it best for officers to hold back on the update of this Traffic Management policy document and for it to be introduced at the same time as the planning guidance that will result from the Site Allocations Development Plan Document process.

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