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**RESIDENTS' PARKING ZONE REVIEW**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor David Lyonette, Transport Portfolio**  
**Responsible Director - Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration), Richard Alty**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. This report constitutes the findings of the Review of Residents' Parking Zones and:
  - (a) describes the existing situation;
  - (b) explains the financial position and policy justification for residents' parking schemes;
  - (c) examines how they are working, taking into account residents' views;
  - (d) suggests options for future more detailed consideration.

**Information and Analysis**

2. In Darlington, there are problems of conflicting parking demands which are felt most around the Town Centre, Memorial Hospital, Railway Station, Darlington College and Football Ground. In sixteen areas of the town, the solution to such conflicting demand has been, or will be, the introduction of a Residents' Parking Zone (RPZ).
3. Four types of parking demand can be identified:
  - (a) from residents for long stay parking, especially overnight and at weekends or holidays, in a safe location, convenient to the house of the driver;
  - (b) from visitors, often for shorter periods of time, for social visits by friends and family or home visits by professionals or tradespeople;
  - (c) from commuters who seek to park for long periods of the working day for free; and
  - (d) from users of Darlington Railway Station who seek to park 'on street' where some of the users may require parking for more than one day.

4. In November 2003 a survey of 6 residents' parking zones revealed that during weekdays 34.6% (616 out of 1777) of the available unrestricted kerbside spaces<sup>1</sup> were occupied by vehicles that were parked in one location for a large part of the day. These vehicles could either have been owned by residents who were not permit holders, or by commuters. Hence, any reduction in the supply of unrestricted on street parking space in these areas could well have an effect on the supply of long stay parking spaces serving the town centre.
5. The current adopted approach to Residents' Parking Schemes in Darlington is a 'part street' approach where the streets include both a residents' parking allocation and other kerbside areas where any driver may park. This approach allows car owning residents to have a choice as to whether they join the scheme or not; whilst giving visitors, business users, professional carers, commuters and others the ability to park unrestricted.
6. On the 13 December 2001, the Environment Scrutiny Committee requested that the then criteria used in prioritising the areas for residents' parking be set as formal criteria against which future schemes will be considered. These criteria are:
  - (a) number of non residential parking pressures;
  - (b) length of time non residential parking extends over; and
  - (c) availability of off street parking for residents.
7. Enforcement of the residents' parking bays is carried out by the Council's Parking Enforcement Wardens between the hours 8.00 am to 6.00 pm Monday to Saturday (including Bank Holidays). This coincides with charging times in car parks. Circumstances where parking in a bay is possible without a permit include parking by emergency vehicles, doctors on call, vehicles being actively unloaded, tradesmen working at a residential address and blue badge holders.
8. Currently, Darlington RPZ permits cost £50 per annum for the first year of the scheme's operation and £25 per annum thereafter. Each permit is specific to a zone and there is no limit to the number of permits (thus vehicles) that can be registered for each household. This charge is intended to contribute to the administrative, maintenance and enforcement costs of running the scheme.
9. Once all the RPZ schemes are in place, there will be a "collar" of residents' parking schemes around the town centre, which should provide effective parking arrangements for local residents, improving their quality of life whilst accruing environmental and traffic management benefits. There is an optimum distance where the benefits of providing residents' parking schemes around the town centre (or other major destination) are outweighed by the practicalities of enforcement and local people's needs. It is suggested that the current distances are adequate, although the situation needs to be kept under periodic review. (An exercise could be undertaken to identify the potential size of the collar. RPZs generally work best where on street parking is prevalent.)
10. **Appendix 1** includes a location plan and list of the existing and proposed RPZs.

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<sup>1</sup> A 'space' is defined as a notional 5m length

## Finance of Existing Schemes

11. The total costs of running the current schemes are almost met from income received. The total cost of approximately £75,000 is balanced by income of £24,843 from sales of permits and £49,982 from fines.
12. The Council have also obtained money via a Section 106 legal agreement (attached to the planning permission) with Darlington Football Club to fund the setting up of an RPZ, so that permits for Zone Z (Neasham Road area) have been issued free from 2003. Limited to match days only, this should be seen as something of a special case since the Football Club paid for its creation. The Council has also indicated that it will not be charging residents who apply in the forthcoming schemes in Borough Road (Zone K), Eastmount Road (Zone L) & Hundens Lane (Zone M), around the new Darlington College site. This is because it is largely the relocation of the College that has necessitated these zones, not just pre-existing parking issues.

## Policy Background

13. Darlington's Second Local Transport Plan (LTP2) sees management of car parking as an integral part of a range of measures to tackle traffic congestion, provide a sustainable transport network and support the local economy, amongst other objectives. The draft Darlington Parking Strategy contained in Annex 17 of the Plan covers all aspects of parking policy. However, more work is needed to develop the Strategy before final approval and the outcome of this review forms part of the process. It is currently anticipated that the full parking strategy will be prepared in 2008. The document will incorporate the Council's response to the guidance for applications for Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) status.
14. Darlington's Climate Change Strategy 2006 to 2010 seeks to reduce the emission of gases that cause climate change. The introduction of Residents Parking Schemes close to the town centre will have caused some motorists to change their behaviour and consider alternative means of transport. This approach is in accordance with Council Policies, as expressed in LTP2.

## Residents' Views on Current Schemes

15. A questionnaire was devised to ask residents in each zone to record their levels of satisfaction on different aspects of the scheme. Residents were also given an opportunity to record individual comments on any aspect of the RPZ. Questionnaires were delivered to each household within each zone and 711 completed questionnaires were returned - a 25% response rate (2,900 questionnaires issued). Ward Councillors were also consulted as part of the review.
16. On average, across all the zones in operation, 42% (297) of respondents felt that the provision of residents' parking spaces in their zone was inadequate. Only 28% (201) of respondents felt that the provision of residents' parking within their street was adequate; 50% (711) felt it inadequate. 37% (265) of respondents felt that the area covered by parking zones should be extended. However, on most questions in the survey the responses were very mixed, with significant numbers both agreeing and disagreeing the questions. A summary of the results of the survey is in **Appendix 2**. It is a possibility, given the

relatively low numbers of responses, that those who did not reply were satisfied with the current arrangements.

## **Options**

17. The options to consider are:

- (a) Do Nothing
- (b) Free Permits
- (c) Increase Permit Cost - Flat Rate
- (d) Increase Permit Cost - Tiered
- (e) Widen eligibility for Permit
- (f) Increase length of Parking Bays
- (g) Increase length of free short stay areas
- (h) Introduce charges for whole street
- (i) Alter hours of operation

Note: These options are an initial strategic sift and more work will be required to establish the detailed feasibility and costs of any preferred solution.

## ***Do Nothing***

18. On the basis that 75% of residents living in the existing residents' parking zones did not choose to comment on their existing parking schemes, it could be assumed that the majority are satisfied with the way that the schemes are working. As a result, the Council could decide to leave the arrangements as they are.
19. The Council is planning to apply for Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) status in 2009, as soon as the necessary national legislation takes effect. In order to prepare to this, it needs to ensure that all current Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) are legally enforceable. Given the anticipated workload to achieve 100% compliance, it is suggested that any alterations to TROs, or physical layouts, are scheduled for after the introduction of CPE.

## ***Free Permits***

20. If the Council continues to provide RPZs on the current basis, then 3 out of the 16 zones will be free to residents wishing to apply. Free permits in all other zones:
- (a) ignore the installation, administrative, enforcement and maintenance costs to the Council. (A pressure of £25,000 minimum from loss of permit receipts.)
  - (b) could increase permits issued, so creating more pressure on kerbside space, contrary to the views of local residents, thus leading to increased dissatisfaction;
  - (c) could increase car use, contributing to more traffic on the roads, and
  - (d) could be abused more easily with permits being sought for non-residents.

Since RPZs benefit only a proportion of households in the Borough (they are not a universal service), there is some merit in the argument that some contribution should be made by the

user. In the survey of all 2,900 households affected, only 355 returned the questionnaire and disagreed with the statement “The current price of parking permits is fair” (although this was half of respondents). 154 agreed with the statement. 124 agreed that “The price for parking permits is good value” and 78 agreed with “I would be willing to pay more for my parking permit if the parking zone restrictions in my zone were enforced more often”.

### ***Increase Permit Cost - Flat Rate***

21. One option to balance the demand for residents’ spaces and the available supply is through increasing the price of a permit. The simplest method would be to have a flat rate applicable to all vehicles, with no restriction on numbers registered to any one address. Currently, the Council charges £25 per annum. This compares to £30 in Durham, £36 in Sheffield and £20 in suburban Newcastle (£99 or £130 in the city centre). A small increase of £5 to £30 would still make Darlington one of the cheapest areas regionally compared to these local examples.

### ***Permit Cost - Tiered***

22. A tiered approach to residents’ permit charges would mean that charges would be variable depending on vehicle emissions (similar to the approach taken by Central Government on Vehicle Excise Duty). By implementing schemes that reduce carbon dioxide emissions locally, Darlington, along with other local authorities, could make a positive contribution to climate change nationally and internationally. If the above approach is followed, then it would be also beneficial to control the number of vehicles that can be registered at any one address, bringing benefits in terms of equity of opportunity, to park in the residential bays.

### ***Widen Eligibility for Permit***

23. Widening the eligibility for permits to carers, visitors and business users would be popular with these groups and would answer many of their issues. However, it would have the contrary effect on residents since it would dilute the benefits of a protected parking bay previously for their use alone. The provision of visitor permits would also be more open to abuse/fraud. If this option were to be successful, there would need to be a system for examining the eligibility of permit applicants. This option could only realistically be achieved by altering all schemes to ‘full street’ schemes (see paragraph 24) as without that, there would be insufficient parking spaces within the residents’ parking bays to accommodate the additional vehicles. The option would help those Council staff who need a vehicle to work in the RPZ areas, since the whole street would be protected for permit holders.

### ***Increase Length of Parking Bays***

24. It would be possible to convert the existing “part” street schemes to ‘full’ kerbside schemes, whereby all of the road frontage in a particular area would be included in the residents’ parking areas. This would involve the conversion of existing unrestricted areas to additional residents’ parking. Visitor, Carer and Business parking permits would need to be introduced to allow these users to park in the residents’ areas. Tradesmen would similarly need a permit unless the current telephone exemption service is continued. This option will increase pressure on some car parks or displace parking to streets outside of the RPZ. This option would take time, money and staff resources - it is estimated that it would take

upwards of two years minimum to complete the process after the introduction of CPE. No financial resource has been identified for such work, although conversion costs could be funded through prudential borrowing against future permit receipts.

### ***Increase Length of Free Short Stay Areas***

25. Introducing limited waiting where there is currently unrestricted parking, could provide more space for visitors on a short stay basis, without affecting the supply of residents' parking. Introduction of a 2 hour time restriction would mean that commuters would be deterred from parking in these areas. This would improve the situation for short term visitors, but would mean less parking available for commuters and residents who have chosen not to purchase a permit.

### ***Introduce Charges for Whole Street***

26. Another option would be to introduce on street daytime charges for the whole street in these residential areas. Residents could be exempted from the charges by purchasing a permit. However, the available parking could be used by visitors to residential properties and other town centre users. Non permit holders would need to purchase a ticket from machines which would need to be installed on street. Charges could be designed to accommodate both short stay visitor use and longer stay commuter and visitor use.

### ***Alter Hours of Operations***

27. The standard hours of operation for the existing residents' parking schemes are 8.00 am - 6.00 pm, Monday to Saturday including Bank Holidays. In most cases, these times are considered to be appropriate to the areas concerned. However, some of the residents' parking areas are affected by nearby travel generators that operate beyond these standard hours, such as Darlington Railway Station, the Memorial Hospital, Civic Theatre and Darlington College. Extending the hours that these schemes operate would be possible, but this would necessitate additional enforcement resources. It would also be possible to reduce the hours that the schemes operate to cover one or two hours in the middle of the day. This would reduce the need to enforce the schemes as frequently, although it would be preferable to operate such a system in conjunction with a 'full street' scheme.

### ***Increase Fines to Pay for More Enforcement***

28. It would be possible to increase the penalty charge for parking without a permit or other permission within RPZs, in order to raise more income. This could then be spent on increasing the level of enforcement. However, this option would only be available until 2010 when a Civil Parking Enforcement scheme will be introduced for the Borough. At that time, the level of penalties will be fixed according to a national scale of offences and the enforcement resources improved accordingly. The option of increasing fines at this stage has, therefore, been ruled out and not evaluated below.

### ***Summary of Options***

29. A qualitative assessment of how all 9 options perform against both residents' requirements and the relevant wider issues is provided in Tables 1 and 2 below.

**Table 1 - Summary of Residents' Issues**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Space Available</b>	<b>Visitor Parking</b>	<b>Enforcement Required</b>	<b>Information Available</b>	<b>Design of Bays</b>	<b>Hours of Operation</b>	<b>Cost of Permits</b>
Do Nothing	X	X	0	0	0	0	0
Free Permits	XX	0	X	✓	X	0	✓✓
Increase Cost - Flat	✓	0	0	✓	X	0	X
Increase Cost - Tiered	✓	0	X	✓	0	0	✓
Widen Eligibility	X	✓✓	X	✓	0	0	0
Length of Parking Bay	✓✓	X	X	✓	✓✓	0	0
Increase free short stay	✓✓	✓✓	X	✓	0	0	0
On street charging	XX	✓	X	✓	✓✓	0	✓✓
Hours of Operation	✓	X	XX	✓	0	✓✓	0

Key: ✓ = positive ✓✓ = very positive x = negative xx = very negative 0 = neutral

**Table 2 - Summary of Wider Issues**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Climate Change</b>	<b>Congestion/Traffic</b>	<b>Financial Implications</b>	<b>Impact on Town Centre</b>
Do Nothing	X	X	0	0
Free Permits	XX	XX	XX	X
Increase Cost - Flat	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increase Cost - Tiered	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓
Widen Eligibility	X	X	X	XX
Length of Parking Bay	✓	✓✓	✓	XX
Increase free short stay	X	X	X	0
On street charging	✓	✓	0	XX
Hours of Operation	0	0	✓	X

Key: ✓ = positive ✓✓ = very positive x = negative xx = very negative 0 = neutral

## Outcome of Consultations

30. The results of the extensive consultation exercise with affected residents are covered in Paragraphs 4, 15 and 16 and in Appendix 2.
31. A petition was handed in by Councillor Galletley at the Cabinet meeting on 16 January as part of the budget consultation with 210 signatures, this states: *We, the undersigned residents of College Ward, ask the cabinet of Darlington Borough Council to: (a) provide residents' parking permits free of charge as it does in the parking scheme around the Darlington College, and (b) extend the Stanhope Road residents' parking scheme to include Fife Road (north and south).* The charges for permits have been considered in paragraph 20 above. It suggested that further consideration is given to Fife Road, including consultations with residents there, after work on Civil Parking Enforcement.

## Conclusions

32. The qualitative assessment above suggests that the most appropriate options derived from both residents views and wider perspectives are:
  - (a) Increase cost of permit - flat rate
  - (b) Introduce tiered permit charges
  - (c) Increase length of parking bays
  - (d) No change at present. Only 12% of households sent surveys (355 from 2,900 sent; but 50% of respondents) responded to say that the current arrangements were not adequate.
33. If any of these options are taken forward for more detailed assessment and consultation, then the assessment needs to include:
  - (a) consideration of new eligibility criteria for permits;
  - (b) the possibility of on street charging for those who do not need, or want, a permit; and
  - (c) the implications for preparing for an application for CPE status. It is likely that physical and legal changes to the RPZ schemes will be better delivered after CPE status has been granted. Making significant changes to RPZs now would delay CPE work due to the staff time involved. Devoting staff time to progressing CPE for the Borough may be seen as a higher priority than devoting it to changes in RPZs at the present time.

## Legal Implications

34. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.



## **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

35. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

## **Council Policy Framework**

36. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.

## **Decision Deadline**

37. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

## **Key Decisions**

38. This is a key decision since the schemes affect the lives of residents in the town centre and other areas.

## **Recommendations**

39. It is recommended that:
- (a) That any changes to the operation of the Residents' Parking Zones await the work on Civil Parking Enforcement.
  - (b) That fees for Residents' Parking Zone permits be retained.
  - (c) That it be noted that there will be no charge for those permits in Borough Road (Zone K), Eastmount Road (Zone L) and Hundens Lane (Zone M), around the new Darlington College site, and Zone Z adjacent to the football club.
  - (d) That the feasibility and implications of tiered fees for permits, to contribute to Climate Change objectives, be considered further.
  - (e) That consideration is given to whether changes in enforcement regimes can improve enforcement.
  - (f) That, as part of work on Civil Parking Enforcement, further consideration be given to introducing permits for carers, increasing the length of parking bays, and increasing the hours of operation where required (for example around the Memorial Hospital).

## **Reasons**

40. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:

- (a) The legal and resource implications for preparing for an application for CPE status. It is likely that physical and legal changes to the RPZ schemes will be better delivered after CPE status has been granted. Making significant changes to RPZs now would delay CPE work due to the staff time involved.
- (b) The permit fees contribute to the operational costs of providing residents' parking zones and assist the effective operation of the schemes.
- (c) Further work is required on the detail of how the operation of residents' parking zones can contribute to climate change and other policy issues.

**Richard Alty**  
**Assistant Chief Executive (Regeneration)**

## **Background Papers**

- (i) Residents' Car Parking Zones Review Survey Results Report: Capita Symonds Dec 2006
- (ii) Darlington: A Town on the Move Second Local Transport Plan 2006 to 2011
- (iii) Darlington's Climate Change Strategy 2006 to 2010

Jeremy Smith : Extension 2652

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