

APPENDIX B

BACKGROUND PAPER ON PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO PARKING OPTIONS FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES (DCES)

1 Summary

- 1.1 This paper supports the report to the Committee meeting of 25 June 2019, details the issues and options; and recommends a full proposal to replace the outdated business permit criteria, while creating new parking opportunities for the staff of local businesses, in Rickmansworth and Chorleywood.
- 1.2 The report addresses the required review of business permits and proposes a solution that will make better use of unused parking capacity in the two towns, by addressing parking needs of local employees who require regular, cost-effective parking near their workplace, while safeguarding the parking needs of local residents and other existing permit holders. The detail in this report develops the proposal agreed in outline by the August 2018 meeting of this Committee.

2 Details

- 2.1 The Policy and Resources Committee requested a review of the criteria and demand for business permits, together with other types of permit types such as season tickets in Rickmansworth. That review was reported to the August 2018 meeting of this Committee, which requested detailed investigation into a scheme and consultation to introduce new permits for local employees' use in on-street permit bays in Rickmansworth and potentially in Chorleywood, converting 'Business Permit' bays in off-street car parks to generic permit bays and offer permits to local employees.
- 2.2 The August 2018 Committee delegated authority to the Director in consultation with the Lead Member subject to consultation on details of each scheme with relevant local Ward Councillors and the Lead Member, the outcome of the consultation and any final scheme to be reported to the Committee as appropriate.
- 2.3 Further analysis was undertaken of every street in the permit parking areas within a 15-minute walking radius of the centres of the two towns to show capacity against permit uptake (by street) and actual observed capacity. A proposal was then developed to provide a new type of permit to enable employees to park near their workplace.
- 3.1 A study has been undertaken to determine the evidence for spare capacity in permit bays located in Rickmansworth and Chorleywood. This study includes research into total bay capacity against total numbers of permit issued and surveys of streets where capacity was identified, to show typical actual parking pressure in permit bays, both due to permit holders during operational hours and to general parking outside operational hours.
- 3.2 This research is intended to provide a clear picture of the current parking pressures in every street where permit data indicates that capacity exceeds daytime parking demand. The study considered the take up of resident permits as well as visitor permits over the last eighteen months. Detailed results are shown at **Appendix A** of the June 2019 Committee report.
- 3.3 In Rickmansworth, the maximum spare capacity could be over 300 bays (with a conservative minimum of around 160 when allowing for full capacity by all types of issued permits in addition to an allowance of 10% reserve capacity to accommodate non-standard demands such as commercial deliveries or works vehicles).
- 3.4 These figures do not include the 37 off-street permit parking bays that are currently allocated to Business Permits in Rickmansworth.
- 3.5 In Chorleywood, maximum spare capacity could be around 150 bays.
- 3.6 It is therefore considered that there is clear opportunity for a scheme to be promoted to create new permits for local employees.

4 Issues

- 4.1 The review of business permits and development of proposals for new permits for people who work locally has taken account of several different issues relating to workplace parking in the District. These are summarised as:
- A. Business permit criteria are outdated and must be brought into line with current legal requirements as well as current needs of businesses and the local economy.
 - B. The Council wants to promote affordable parking for people who work locally, to support business and the local economy.
 - C. A full review of the local Controlled Parking Zones has not been carried out for over five years and it is apparent that needs have changed over that time, with the number of permits issued being significantly fewer than overall capacity, in many streets.
 - D. Members are keen that parking opportunities are used efficiently without wastage, while protecting priority parking for those who need it most, including residents and disabled road users.
 - E. The allocation of the many small car parks, in Rickmansworth in particular, is not demonstrably efficient and it appears that incremental changes over time may not have been strategically assessed, particularly in the local context of the Rickmansworth one-way system. The current assessment of permit parking must take into account the way that the permit car parks are allocated and consider whether a more efficient arrangement could be introduced.

4.2 The issues are considered below against the options, highlighting recommended options.

Issue A – Business permit criteria

- 4.3 The proposal would retain the designation of Business permits but would generalise the designated bays to make them available to any permit holder.
- 4.4 The business permit quota would be included with the provision of the new local employee permits, so that business permits could be used in any relevant permit bays. For example, in Talbot Road, rather than designating on-street permit bays and off-street permit bays, all bays would be considered as one resource, with permit holders (whether residents, businesses permits or local employee permits) being eligible to park in them.
- 4.5 Numbers of Business permits issued in the 2018/19 financial year are listed in the table below:

Parking place	Count of Permit No
Bury Lane	
Bury Lane/Talbot Car Park	5
Bury Lane/Talbot CP	1
Bury/Talbot CP	11
Ferry Car Park	21
Talbot South/Northway	3
Zone D	1
Zone ST	3
Grand Total	49

4.6 **Issue B - Parking for low-paid retail employees**

- 4.7 The Council's intention is to make it easier and more affordable for people who work locally to park near their workplace, in order to support local businesses and to make it easier for them to recruit and retain staff. The provision of permit parking zones in town centres has historically been managed

in a way that permits residents to park on-street but does not provide specifically for local employees, whose needs are addressed by long-term car parks. There is however an undersupply of long-stay car parking in the town and the fees are set to reflect this, currently at £4 per day. This undersupply is identified by the number of businesses expressing desires for employee permits (over 290) and the number of available parking bays (around long-stay). There is currently no reduction in this fee for people who need to park locally to work locally.

- 4.8 Parking provision for local employees can enable the Council to meet its policy objectives to improve local retail centres and to facilitate economic development. It particularly wants to protect and enhance the High Streets in the key settlements of Rickmansworth and Chorleywood.

Issue C – Review of Traffic Orders

- 4.9 There are various requirements to update the current Parking Zone Orders made in 2006, as amended, including the need to update the eligibility of residential addresses (due to planning applications) and the need to regularise the eligibility of businesses for permits (as they are currently required to be vetted by an external body no longer extant). There are also various minor updates to permit bay modifications due to development (such as on Ebury Road) or to other changes to land (such as in Bury Lane Car Park).

Issue D - Protecting existing permit-holder parking

- 4.10 In response to concerns raised by Members at the August 2018 Committee, that allowing additional permit holders to park in already-congested streets would create unacceptable levels of parking pressure, detailed further analysis was undertaken to clearly show current parking pressure in relevant streets. Equally a robust methodology has been developed to ensure that the numbers of proposed permits issued would not negatively affect overall capacity in these streets. The proposed new permit type would, as explained in the August 2018 report, be carefully managed to ensure that impact on current permit holders is minimised.

Proposals developed to protect space for resident permit holder parking

- 4.11 The methodology that has been used to achieve this includes analysis of actual unused capacity (which is robustly demonstrated through analysis of permit data and surveys).
- 4.12 Further protection is provided by the proposal that permits will be issued for use in specific parking places (limited to one street) and that numbers of permits issued will be limited to a figure that each parking place can comfortably contain. This figure was developed from assessment of total capacity.
- 4.13 This proposed number of permits for each parking place is based on the capacity identified as unused if every current permit was in use, with a buffer of ten per cent for each street.
- 4.14 This capacity figure was then correlated with the survey data to demonstrate capacity (see **Appendix A**). The streets with significant extra capacity were considered against the detailed survey data to arrive at a list of streets considered suitable for the introduction of new permits.

New measures to improve the amount of parking capacity for permit holders

Capacity at changeover

- 4.15 A specific concern was raised that while capacity is identified during the day, there could be excessive parking demand if local employees left work at times later than when residents return home. It was clarified by the Member voicing this concern that this related specifically to the terraced dwellings in south-east Rickmansworth, which have little off-street parking, so are more vulnerable to changes in parking pressure.
- 4.16 Investigating this concern, Officers carried out two weeks of regular weekday surveys to show capacity during the day in the four roads in Zone C that this concern applied to (and in the associated

permit-holder car parks). These surveys compared daytime capacity with capacity at the end of the day, between 5:30pm and 6:30pm. (When the controlled hours end).

- 4.17 The data shows clearly that each day, as residents returned home, capacity dropped by an average of 18 bays in the survey area, from an average of 80 unoccupied bays available during the day, to around 62 unoccupied bays (between 5:30pm and 6pm) and around 53 between 6pm and 6:30.
- 4.18 These figures are considered reliable to show that this concern is not substantiated, but to provide further reassurance that resident parking will be protected, two additional strategies have been developed: provision of additional parking bays within car parks and relevant on-street permit parking zones; and improvements to the way long-stay car parks are used, to allow permit holders to park in available long-stay spaces towards the end of the day.
- 4.19 As set out in the earlier reports, Officers have also investigated the creation of more parking bays in the relevant areas and around 23 new bays are proposed in Zone C and in the Bury Lane car park. Physical works to create these bays have been carried out and an amendment to the traffic order is required to designate them as permit bays, so it is recommended that this Committee authorises officers to consult on this (including any details required to make the new bays available to local residents and others who are currently eligible for permits).
- 4.20 It is also recommended that the Committee authorises that general permit-holders be permitted to park in the long-stay car parks in Rickmansworth at the end of the day. These car parks currently operate until 4:30pm so it is proposed that permit holders can use them from 3:30pm. This would address the specific issue of evening changeover with permit holders.

Business permit holders

- 4.21 The proposal would retain the designation of Business permits but would generalise the designated bays to make them available to any permit holder. The business permit quota would be included with the provision of the new local employee permits, so that business permits could be used in any relevant permit bays. For example, in Talbot Road, rather than designating on-street permit bays and off-street permit bays, all bays would be considered as one resource, with permit holders (whether residents, businesses permits or local employee permits) being eligible to park in them.

Issue E – management of off-street parking provision in car parks

- 4.22 There are three business permit holder car parks car park (hereon 'CP') with 10 or 12 bays each, arranged around the town. Equally, long-stay provision is scattered so that drivers unable to find long-stay parking in one car park (such as Bury Lane CP with 20 bays) have to drive around the town or, often, out of the town and around the A412 to enter the town from a different direction.
- 4.23 This is due to two factors, first the dispersion of TRDC land ownership in Rickmansworth, with 21 car parks scattered around a small town, an average of around 30 bays in each.
- 4.24 The second factor is the enforced directional highway routeing through the town which due to the duplex one-way system has three entrances and two main exits to the two encircling classified roads, but with little real accessibility for vehicular traffic to move around within the town.
- 4.25 A specific barrier is the closure at Talbot Road, which has 7 car parks, 5 accessible from the east and two from the west but no interconnectivity; another exists on Bury Lane where a 40-bay car park can be reached from any entrance but drivers leaving it to seek further parking opportunities are diverted around the town and classified roads in order to reach the other car parks.
- 4.26 The proposed arrangement would consolidate the business permit holders into the Bury Lane car park, moving its long-stay provision to the small car parks on Talbot Road that are next to the larger 'Talbot Road – High Street' CP(opposite the Coach and Horses PH).
- 4.27 This would have the effect of creating a much larger long-stay offer in one street to make it easier for visitors, who may be drivers unfamiliar with the town (which is a user group at which the long-

stay provision is specifically targeted). It would also concentrate permit holder bays in a car park (Bury Lane) which is anecdotally difficult for visitors to locate, relatively inaccessible (being on a one-way road that forces drivers to leave in a westwards direction) and provides an offer of only 20 long-stay parking opportunities, with the nearest 'next' long-stay car park being either at Talbot Road – High Street CP (accessible via the A412) or Talbot Road West Long-stay CP (accessible by driving all the way around the town centre).

- 4.28 This reallocation is recommended to improve the convenience and attractiveness of the town's parking offer by making it easier both for visitors to locate long-stay parking and for permit-holders to find a space without having to visit multiple car parks. It should, for this reason, also contribute to reducing intra-urban vehicular trips, reducing congestion and pollution.
- 4.29 The reallocation would have the effect of reducing the number of long-stay opportunities accessible immediately from the south entrance to the town (Church Road), from which vehicles would then have immediate access only to Talbot Road West Long-stay CP (which however is the largest long-stay CP). It would also withdraw the offer of 10 short-stay bays in the Bury Lane CP. This withdrawal is not considered likely to cause a significant effect as there are many other short-stay bays available within easy walking distance of this location, for example on Bury Lane itself, at the Ebury House car park or at Talbot Road West, all of which are less than 2 minutes' walk away.

Other considerations

Permit charges

- 4.30 It is necessary to charge fees for parking permits to address the legal requirement that civil parking enforcement covers its costs but these fees can be set differentially. Business permits have historically been provided at a higher fee than resident permits, but as these directly benefited the business (providing off-street storage of commercial vehicles) the fee was more closely related to a commercial rent for vehicle storage.
- 4.31 The price of local employee permits is not related to the price of business permits, but in Rickmansworth would provide an alternative to parking pay-and display in long-stay car parks, for which a typical annual charge is just over £1,000. Any price would therefore reflect a saving on that figure. This Committee recorded a preference for a price of £500, a saving of around 50% on the typical annual charge. This figure is arbitrary so investigation has continued towards developing a robust charge for new permits. Note that it is not feasible to allocate space on highway to any particular individual, organisation or group, except in terms of their special needs relating to the highway.
- 4.32 Detailed analysis of the potential capacity considered a wider range of streets than those initially reviewed, including some further from the town centre), with the result that the potential capacity identified is significantly higher than originally thought. Equally, the additional distance from the town centre (taking into account that all locations considered are at most 15-20 minutes' walk from the town centre), means that it is feasible to create a range of permit prices based on differential distance. Officers have therefore, in discussion with the Lead Member, investigated the possibility of providing a range of differently priced permits allocated to locations at different distances from the town centre.

Payment mechanism

- 4.33 The payment mechanism for the new permits was investigated following discussions with the existing service provider and following receipt of quotations indicating that other providers could provide a saving of around 60% on the standard charge through a 'pay by phone' route, it is also recommended that the new permits are made available through a new service provider, following a procurement process.

Management of permits

4.34 It is proposed that permits are issued under a set of terms and conditions to ensure that they benefit the target group of local employees. These would include controls to ensure that a fixed number of permits is issued in each street, effective only for the relevant street.

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