

CONTROLLED PARKING ZONE ISSUES FOR TASK GROUP

The Controlled Parking Zone scheme has been in operation within Watford since 1997. Residents and businesses of the scheme have been consulted upon the rules and arrangements in both 2007 and 2013, which has resulted in a change to some zones adopting full time hours, further to changes the denomination of the annual allocation of visitor vouchers available. Residents and businesses did not indicate that they wished to see any significant changes made to the operational hours or zone boundaries of the scheme and the vast majority of rules remained unchanged.

However, a number of fundamental rules and policies relating to the administration of the scheme did not form part of the consultations but continue to be raised and challenged by both residents and members. As a result, the Parking Service determined that it would be beneficial to all if those issues were considered and clarified by members to determine if they remain fit for purpose or require amendment. The specific points in question are outlined below:

1. Vehicle Length Limit

Current: length limit 5.25m (height limit 2.3m).

The length limit is equal to the size of a standard Ford Transit van and the restriction applies to residential and business permits.

2007 and 2013 consultations showed that residents continued to support the length limit.

Issue: Some members call for enforcement of the rule, which is done reactively, and others complain about enforcement of the rule. A number of business vehicles belonging to commercial premises or individuals exceed the current limit but we have not received complaints.

Recommendation:

The 5.25m length limit is retained for all residential permits.

Extend the length limit for business permits (CPZ businesses) to 6.0m

2. Business Permits

Current rules: 1 permit per business (Up to two registration marks)

No off street parking available on premises

Registered for business rates

Vehicle must be registered to the business and at the business address

“Vehicle must be used on an intermittent daily basis”

Permits not issued for commuting

Issue: rules are too vague and do not appear to have been consistently applied in the past.

A number of existing permits do not meet the current criteria and some have had them for a number of years. Attempts to withdraw or refuse issue have resulted in complaints and this is difficult due to the number of permits in operation that do not meet the criteria.

Recommendation: Criteria needs to be revisited.

Vehicle should be registered to company but not necessarily at CPZ address (Head Office address etc) – not to an individual at a residential address

Vehicles must realistically be used for the stated operation

3. Blue Badge Drivers

Current: permits are issued free to residents whose vehicle is registered to them at their CPZ address and prove their residency in the usual manner but provide a valid blue badge in their name.

Issue: There are an increasing number of applicants who are seeking free permits because their wife or mother or relative within the household is a blue badge holder and they have caring responsibilities.

Recommendation: Extend free permit issue to cover parents looking after children under 16 years old. Currently 256 residential permits issued free to BB holders/drivers (Loss of income to Council £5,632) Figure likely to increase if extended to carers/partners/relatives (for those over 16 years old). We do not see the correlation between charging for a permit and hindering the individual's ability to continue to care for the adult blue badge holder but this may need to be checked with Legal.

4. One permit per person

Current: Each Council tax property entitled to up to 2 permits but only 1 permit per person

Issue: Increasing number of residents are seeking two permits in their name and state this does not increase the overall numbers of vehicles on the highway or the maximum number of permits in the household beyond two. We are seeing increased member support of these requests and questioning of the rule.

Recommendation: Rule should remain. Up to 2 permits are available to each household but the 1 permit person appears to have attempted to curb each household having 2 permits where it can be avoided. Where these requests are

refused, there will be one less vehicle on the public highway and this is significantly important in central CPZ zones where the availability of space is at a premium such as St Marys Road, where a specific contested request was made.

5. Funerals (Policy)

Current: Exemption only for official vehicles (limo's/hearse)

Issue: Requests from individuals and members for non-enforcement of whole roads during specific dates/hours when guests attending CPZ address for funerals.

Generally accepted when informed of policy but some members less so.

Recommendation: Do not change policy – will impact significantly on residents and businesses in some areas

6. Visitor Voucher Abuse (TRO Revocation) + not scratched zero PCN's

Current: Rules relating to eligibility of vouchers outlined in TRO and instructions for use on face and reverse of vouchers

Issue: Vouchers are abused by a small number of residents, who pass them to businesses and commuters (potentially sell them) or use a variety of methods to re-use a single voucher. A small number of motorists do not scratch the zero when they claim to have arrived on the hour and seek cancellation of any PCN issued, which has often been supported by members.

Recommendation: Amendment required to TRO to allow for the revocation of vouchers when they are abused and confirm that all minutes on Visitor Vouchers must be scratched, including zero. (Visitor Vouchers have been amended to make this even clearer and recent Traffic Penalty Tribunal (TPT) decision supports Council has done all it can)

7. Doctor and Health Visitor (DHV) Permits (TRO Criteria & Charges)

Current: a number of "all zone" permits are issued to various health and caring organisations, which are known as Doctor, Health Visitor (DHV) permits. These are charged at £20 each and allow the holder to visit patients living within the controlled parking zone during restricted hours.

Issue: there is no formal criteria for the application of either of these permits. This can make the assessment of new applications or requests for additional permits difficult. Furthermore, the use of DHV permits is not included in the governing CPZ TRO.

Recommendation: the price of DHV permits is reviewed with consideration given to a tiered pricing structure. A formal criteria should also be created and a suitable clause is inserted in the TRO to reflect this. All DHV permits are revoked and re-issued to applicants under the new criteria and pricing structure.

8. **Staff Permits (TRO Criteria & Charges)**

Current: there are a number of Council staff whose roles require them to carry out visits within the controlled zones and are also issued with “all zone” permits. These are charged at £100 and are intended to be used on a ‘pool’ basis rather than issued to individuals. A number of external organisations have also historically been using these permits, including those which used to form a department of the council. This includes Watford Community Housing Trust, Hertfordshire County Council Highways Department and West Watford Community Association.

Issue: there is no formal criteria for the application of either of these permits. This can make the assessment of new applications or requests for additional permits difficult. Furthermore, the use of staff permits is not included in the governing CPZ TRO. Whether external organisations should receive ‘staff’ permits has also to be questioned.

Recommendation: a formal criteria is created and a suitable clause is inserted in the TRO to reflect this

9. **Late Night Enforcement (Residential Roads)**

Current: Evening enforcement takes place of Zone E (Met Quarter) to 10pm weekdays/Saturdays with some enforcement on Sundays. The general approach to evening enforcement across the town is 1-2 evenings per week until 10pm which includes one evening until 11pm for the overnight lorry ban. This is the only time that CEO’s go into residential roads but do not issue to residential vehicles. All other evening enforcement only relates to the town centre and roads with bus routes. This is all further to weekday matchday enforcement in specific zones. Any enforcement in residential roads, which are primarily Euston Avenue and St Marys Road, is reactive to enforcement requests due to obstruction and access concerns for larger vehicles in need of using the turning heads governed by double yellow lines.

Issue: whilst some residents and members call for enforcement of the double yellow lines in the turning head of residential roads, some residents on the receiving end of such enforcement do not wish this to take place and criticise the service.

Recommendation: allowing residents to use the yellow lines in the evenings does not appear to have caused any specific issues, further to those raised by the emergency services in Zone J area, and this creates additional space where and when it is often at a premium. Continue current arrangements and be reactive to

specific yellow line complaints in circumstances where safety or access concerns may exist.

10. Proof of Residency (Vehicle Ownership)

Current: All applicants seeking a residents parking permit must provide a proof of residency (dated within the last 3 months) or their name must appear on the electoral register. Further, residents must supply a proof of vehicle ownership (V5 log book or insurance) each year.

Issue: the proof of residency and vehicle ownership is viewed as onerous by some residents who are unhappy at providing the same documents each year.

Recommendation: the need to prove residency is an important safe-guard to ensure that permits are not issued to individuals who are no longer resident. The requirement for a V5 or insurance document each year should be removed if the renewal relates to the same vehicle.

11. Refunds (Not formalised – Admin fee)

Current: Permit holders who no longer require their permits and have more than 3 full months remaining can return their permit to the Parking Shop and apply for a pro-rata refund for the number of full months remaining (as shown on the chart below).

PERMIT COST £	FULL MONTHS REMAINING									
	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2 1
6 + 12	NO REFUNDS GIVEN									
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
22 RES	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	NONE
52 RES	44	40	36	32	28	24	20	16	12	NONE
60 BUS	44	40	36	32	28	24	20	16	12	NONE
150 BUS	132	120	108	96	84	72	60	48	36	NONE
300 BUS	264	240	216	192	168	144	120	96	72	NONE

Issue: the permit refund pricing structure is not standardised and leaves the Council open to challenge

Recommendation: that a standard administration fee of £10 is deducted from the refund due on each permit and a pro-rata refund for the remaining months, for permits with more than three months remaining, is provided by BACS upon application. This would also allow for refunds to be given for permits with the full 12 months remaining. The new structure would look as below:-

PERMIT COST £	FULL MONTHS REMAINING									
	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2 1
6 + 12	NO REFUNDS GIVEN									
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
22 RES	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	0
52 RES	38.50	35	31.50	28	24.50	21	17.50	14	10.50	0
60 BUS	44	40	36	32	28	24	20	16	12	0
150 BUS	126.50	115	103.50	92	80.50	69	57.50	46	34.50	0
300 BUS	264	240	216	192	168	144	120	96	72	0

12. **Driveway CPZ parking by permit holders (Change TRO to allow revocation)**

Current: All residents sign a declaration agreeing not to park in front of vehicular access points and driveways and acknowledge that this could result in the withdrawal of their permits.

Issue: On occasion we receive complaints of this behaviour and it is usually dealt with by writing to the permit holding resident and reminding them of the declaration. However, there is no formal provision in the TRO that would allow the Council to withdraw the permit in this circumstance.

Recommendation: A suitable clause needs to be written into the TRO so that persistent instances of abuse can be dealt with.

13. Residents Permits minimum tenancy period

Current: Residents must only prove residency by way of electoral roll, tenancy agreement, Council Tax or utility bill etc. We do not issue annual permits to applicants who will be resident for periods of less than 6 months.

Issue: This is not a formalised process and we are frequently presented with applications from tenants in temporary housing etc seeking annual permits, although they will only be resident for short term periods.

Recommendation: Formalise the minimum 6 months tenancy period to qualify for a 12 month permit. All other residents remain entitled to visitor vouchers.