

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 23 July 2014
Report of: Jane Custance, Head of Regeneration & Development
Title: St Albans Road Parking Study

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 In 2007 the Council carried out a parking study in the area surrounding St Albans Road bounded by the West Coast Main Line and the Abbey railway line to determine the views of residents on the parking issues in their area and to ascertain if there was support from residents for area wide parking controls and the introduction of a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) as a means of introducing a residents' permit parking scheme.
- 1.2 No clear support for a CPZ was expressed in 2007 and as a consequence proposals were not developed beyond the initial consultation stage and works were limited to the revision of parking controls on St Albans Road itself in association with physical enhancement works.
- 1.3 More recently the Ward Councillors from Callowland made representations to the Portfolio Holder based on approaches made to them from residents in the Ward requesting that a further consultation be undertaken regarding the possibility of a residents' permit parking scheme.
- 1.4 As a result a parking study for the Callowland area along with a small section of Leggatts Ward to the west of Leavesden Road was commissioned to investigate the parking issues in the study area and to determine the views of residents and businesses in relation to the principle of introducing area wide parking controls.
- 1.5 This study was carried out in parallel with the CPZ Review which reported to Cabinet in December 2013. The CPZ Review sought views from residents living within the existing CPZs in the town regarding the operation of the zones. Overall the satisfaction level with the operational aspects of the existing CPZs was extremely high (in excess of 90%). The key operating characteristics of the existing CPZs were validated through the CPZ Review confirming that they offer a robust framework for addressing commuter parking and it was this framework which formed the basis of the consultation scheme that was consulted on through stage 2 of the St Albans Road Parking Study. One outcome of the CPZ Review was that the Council explore further the opportunities for introducing a commercially sustainable car club. This work is currently being commissioned. If successful, provision of a club may enable residents and visitors to the Borough to forgo ownership and/ or use of their own vehicle releasing parking capacity for others to use or to reduce congestion generally. In a highly congested area such as Callowland this initiative may have significant relevance.
- 1.6 Stage 1 of the St Albans Road study sought through an informal public consultation and detailed parking survey to identify any parking issues and views on high level parking management solutions should they be required and supported by the

community.

- 1.7 Stage 1 concluded that residents' parking was problematic with the majority of residents in favour of progressing a parking study in the area.
- 1.8 In discussion with the Ward Members for Callowland and Leggatts and the Portfolio Holder it was agreed to commission stage 2 of the study. This consisted of the development of a Residents' Parking Scheme design layout for the whole of the study area and a public consultation of the proposals which completed in January 2014.
- 1.9 The objective of the second stage of the study was to engage with residents and businesses and get their opinions on the initial design in order to:
 - Understand if there was in principle support from residents and businesses for the implementation of such a scheme
 - Understand if residents were in favour of the initial design of the scheme
 - Identify suggestions regarding possible amendments to the scheme
 - To better understand local parking issues and what could be done to alleviate problems.
- 1.10 This report presents the results of the stage 2 consultation along with recommendations for further work.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That in light of the responses to the stage 2 Public Consultation, proposals for a Residents Permit Parking Scheme in the St Albans Road Residents Parking Scheme study area be abandoned.
- 2.2 That in view of the lack of community support demonstrated through the stage 2 consultation of the St Albans Road Parking Study, proposals for area wide parking controls are not considered in the Callowland area for a minimum of 5 years.
- 2.3 That a review of existing waiting restrictions within the study area be undertaken in consultation with affected residents and businesses to determine where amendment to current controls can be made subject to visibility and traffic flow considerations to allow an increase in on-street parking capacity.
- 2.4 That specific instances of obstructive parking raised by consultees be investigated to determine if additional parking controls to secure access to premises are necessary.
- 2.5 That existing limited waiting parking provision and loading bays in the study area be reviewed in consultation with local businesses to identify opportunities to amend the controls to better meet the needs of local businesses.
- 2.6 That the current parking controls on Leavesden Road between its junctions with Cosewood Road and Lowestoft Road be reviewed to identify whether they can be amended to provide additional parking opportunities for local residents during the working day.
- 2.7 That Hertfordshire County Council be requested to consider the benefits of introducing one way streets within the study area to reduce traffic conflicts.

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Report approved by: Jane Custance, Head of Regeneration & Development

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The St Albans Road parking study commissioned at the request of the Ward Members sought to identify parking issues and develop parking management options acceptable to the residents and businesses of the area that could assist in addressing those issues.
- 3.2 Because of the size of the project, the Council engaged one of its Framework Consultants, Mott MacDonald, to carry out the consultation.
- 3.3 Stage 1 of the study involving the distribution of over 3,100 consultation packs produced a response rate of 27% which is considered to be good for this type of exercise. 86% of those that responded indicated that they regularly experienced parking problems and 70% supported the progressing of the parking study further.
- 3.4 Of those respondents who experienced parking problems, 26% stated that the difficulties were most severe in the evening. A smaller proportion (19%) felt the issue was most prevalent overnight. These results support the assertion that commuter parking conflicts with residential parking. Commuters are still taking up on-street space as residents return home in their vehicles in the evening at the end of the working day. This problem could be alleviated by a CPZ or yellow line restrictions. Developing a management scheme to address parking congestion overnight is more problematic as the overwhelming majority of vehicles affected will be owned by residents. A 24/7 CPZ could be introduced to effectively manage vehicle ownership. However, this is unlikely to be palatable as the “solution” would most likely be worse than the problem as far as residents are concerned and the costs of administering such a CPZ would be prohibitive.
- 3.5 The results of the stage 1 report were considered by the Portfolio Holder in discussion with the Ward Councillors from Callowland and Leggatts Ward and it was agreed that in light of the views expressed, the study should continue to stage 2, where more detailed proposals could be developed to further explore the views of residents and businesses in the consultation area.
- 3.6 Consultation on a Residents Parking Scheme design layout was initiated at the end of 2013 with details of the consultation documentation being developed in consultation with Ward Members from Callowland and Leggatts and the Portfolio Holder. The consultation ran across the Christmas 2013 period, concluding at the end of January 2014. The consultation pack consisted of details of the design layout along with supporting information on how it might work and a questionnaire. Responses could be made in paper form using a supplied FREEPOST envelope or electronically using Survey Monkey software. The consultation documentation was also viewable on the

Council's website which also provided a link to the electronic response channel for those who wished to use it. A copy of the consultation material including the plan showing the design layout can be seen at Appendix A.

- 3.7 In addition to the distributed information, 2 public exhibitions were held in the consultation area. Towards the end of the consultation period a public meeting was also held at the request of spokespeople representing residents and businesses opposed to the scheme. This was attended by approximately 200 people and the Council was represented by the Portfolio Holder with Officer support along with a number of the Ward Councillors. The meeting was chaired by Richard Harrington MP.
- 3.8 A total of 1,344 responses were received split between businesses and residents giving an overall response rate of 42%, an excellent figure for this type of survey and significantly greater than the 27% rate recorded for stage 1. In addition 2 petitions were received from residents groups opposed to the Residents Parking Scheme.
- 3.9 Considerable interest was shown in the consultation and as a consequence the consultation period was extended by 3 weeks to maximise opportunity for those who wished to express a view to do so. In addition the Elected Mayor wrote to all businesses on the consultation address database urging them to respond so that the views of the business community could be fully understood.
- 3.10 Analysis of the returned information was carried out by Mott Macdonald and a summary along with their recommendations was presented in report form to the Council by Mott Macdonald. Details of the consultation processes, the analysis and outcomes are presented in the Stage 2 Public Consultation Analysis Report which can be found at Appendix A to this report. It is not intended to repeat the detail contained in the Mott Macdonald report in this covering Cabinet Report however specific comment will be made on key issues.
- 3.11 In overall terms the consultation scheme was supported by 26% of respondents although results on a street by street basis varied significantly from this average figure.
- 3.12 In brief summary of the 39 roads consulted, only 4 had a majority of those who responded that were in favour of the introduction of a Residents' Parking Scheme. A further 7 roads responded with between 40 and 50% in favour. The remaining 28 roads rejected the proposal by a more substantial majority.
- 3.13 In general, support for the scheme was at it's strongest in the south of the survey area with the level of support being generally less running north from that point.
- 3.14 85 of the 285 businesses circulated in the consultation area responded equating to a response rate of 30%. In addition 10 businesses from outside the consultation area also responded with their views. 93% of the businesses from within the consultation area opposed the scheme.
- 3.15 Analysis of the detailed comments from residents and businesses included on the consultation returns are contained within section 4.3 of the Mott MacDonald report. In brief summary however the main issues/ concerns raised were as follows:-
- The proposals will have a negative impact on local businesses including customer and employee parking and loading/ unloading.
 - Issues regarding visitor permits and parking provision for community facilities

- Lack of guarantee of a parking space
- Concerns from households with more than 2 vehicles
- Removal of yellow lines/ loading bans wanted/ needed
- Enforcement of current restrictions required

3.16 The Council's long standing approach to the introduction of Residents' Parking Schemes is that it is only done if there is demonstrable support from the community for the scheme. The results from the stage 2 consultation clearly show that this support is not there with only 27% of total respondents responding in favour.

3.17 More detailed analysis of the responses shows that a small number of streets towards the south of the consultation area do support the scheme however. Specifically Copsewood Road/ Milton Street, Nevill Grove and Victoria Street support the scheme with support ranging between 64% and 81% of those that responded. A plan showing the location of the roads both for and against the scheme can be found on page 10 of Mott MacDonald's report at Appendix A.

4.0 Mott MacDonald's Recommendations

4.1 In their report Mott MacDonald has presented a number of recommendations.

4.2 The close geographic proximity of the roads supporting the consultation scheme (with the possible exception of Victoria Road) does offer the opportunity for the Council to consider the introduction of a Residents' Parking Scheme for these roads and Mott MacDonald recommend that the Council pursue this course of action whilst terminating proposals in the remainder of the study area. Mott MacDonald do highlight in their recommendations contained in section 5.2 of their report however, that;
'...the congested nature of the study area, the physical constraints applied to it by the West Coast main Line, the Abbey Railway Line and the existence of CPZs in adjacent areas is likely to displace non-resident vehicles in to adjacent streets..... In light of [this] the Council will need to decide whether to take forward proposals in the small number of streets supporting such a scheme.'

4.3 The view of Officers is that displacement will be inevitable from a scheme encompassing only 3 or 4 streets as there are significant numbers of streets against the proposal within the study area which are equally close to Watford Junction and the Town Centre that non-resident cars could divert to. This would have the effect of increasing parking pressures in these streets which in the medium to long term could see incremental expansion of the Residents' Parking Scheme to other parts of the study area against the expressed wishes of the residents of those streets.

4.4 In view of the above, Officers recommend that proposals for a Residents' Parking Scheme are not taken forward for any of the roads in the study area. In view of the negative response to a resident's parking scheme across the majority of the study area and the significant cost involved in developing and consulting on schemes of this nature, Members are also invited to support a further recommendation that proposals of this nature are not considered in the Callowland area for a minimum of 5 years.

4.5 There is clear concern in the consultation area regarding the availability of parking from both a resident and business perspective. Mott MacDonald make a series of recommendations proposing a review of existing parking controls in the study area. In summary these reviews would cover the following:-

- **Existing waiting restrictions to ensure that they are all necessary.** Officers support this recommendation and propose that the focus of this review is primarily to identify opportunities to increase the level of parking available by the removal or relaxation of yellow line controls where visibility and traffic flow considerations allow. There may be limited instances where additional controls may be considered appropriate however and these would be included as part of this review.
- **Existing limited waiting restrictions.** These controls, which limit the length of stay for parked vehicles, are predominantly located on or close to St Albans Road and provide parking opportunity for customers and visitors to local businesses to park close to their destination. Officers support this recommendation and further recommend that the review be expanded to include a review of existing loading bays and bus bays and that it be carried out in conjunction with local businesses to ensure that their views are taken fully in to account in the development of any proposals for change.
- **Existing single yellow lines in Leavesden Road.** The possibility of introducing additional parking space on Leavesden Road between its junctions with Copewood Road and Lowestoft Road has been specifically identified. Ideally, the relaxation of parking controls on this section of road where day time parking is currently prohibited would incorporate measures to prevent all-day commuter parking taking place but without the need for permits. This would need to be explored with residents, the Police and the Highway Authority but could potentially provide some day time parking relief for those roads which expressed support for the consultation scheme because of the level of parking conflict they experience with non-resident parking during the day. Consequently this recommendation is supported by Officers.
- **Parking facilities for visitors to Community Facilities.** Mott MacDonald also recommend that a review of parking provision for community facilities be undertaken. Allocation of dedicated space for such facilities could only be achieved by a reduction in provision for businesses or residents. As parking demand from residents and businesses is high and a significant level of concern was expressed in the consultation at any loss of parking opportunity, Officers feel that reallocation of space to community facilities is unlikely to be acceptable to residents. Consequently, Officers do not support this recommendation and it does not form part of the recommendations of this report.

4.6 Mott MacDonald has also identified issues of traffic conflict across the study area caused by vehicles travelling in opposite directions on narrow heavily parked streets meeting head on. The principle of creating passing places by the introduction of short lengths of yellow line as was shown in the consultation scheme was not popular because of the loss of on-street parking opportunity however the problem remains, particularly in the vicinity of business premises (for example the Shakespeare Industrial Estate). Mott MacDonald recommend that this issue be forwarded to the Highway Authority, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) for consideration as it falls outside the general scope of the highways powers delegated down to Watford Council by HCC. Officers support this view and recommend that HCC be approached with a request to investigate the feasibility of introducing one-way streets on roads within the study area where traffic conflicts occur.

5.0 Next Steps

5.1 Subject to decisions made by Cabinet in relation to the recommendations attached to this report a brief will be prepared to take the project forward in to it's implementation stage.

5.2 This work can be split in to a number of headline tasks as follows:-

Headline 1 – notifying residents and businesses of the stage 2 outcome

It is recommended that this be accomplished by way of letter drop to all properties in the study area, signed by the Portfolio Holder outlining the key decisions reached by Cabinet following consideration of this report. **Timescale; July/ August 2014**

Headline 2 – notify HCC of the Council's request for the feasibility of one-way streets to be investigated by them as a means of reducing vehicle conflicts within the study area. Timescale; July/ August 2014.

Headline 3 – Commission the review of existing parking controls within the study area as detailed in recommendations 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 & 2.6. This task will involve consideration of existing controls and the development of options for amendments to both their extent and duration. The focus of this will be predominantly on St Albans Road and Leavesden Road however all existing controls will be critically examined and their need reviewed. This area of work will involve consultation with interested parties including elected Members, HCC, the Police, bus companies, local businesses and affected residents. **Timescale; Survey/ option development and consultation July – December 2014.**

Headline 4 – Option implementation. Subject to changes to current controls being identified it will be necessary to take the changes through the statutory processes with a view to implementing them subject to any statutory objections being satisfactorily addressed. **Timescale; January – April 2015**

5.4 Consultation with formal bodies such as the Police, HCC, bus companies etc would be by meeting and exchange of correspondence. With regard to businesses it is proposed to make contact with those businesses which were prominent during the stage 2 study and to build on their interest by seeking to establish a focus group to represent business views. As any emerging proposals are likely to be small scale in nature, consultation with residents would generally be limited to those properties within the vicinity of specific proposals and would be by way of letter drop and questionnaire.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

6.1.1 The cost of implementing recommendations 2.1 to 2.6 are estimated at approximately £25,000, the exact figure being dependent on the outcome of the consultation process and waiting restriction review highlighted in the report. This cost would be met from the Parking Service Project Code (HDR 000 D1142). No on-going revenue costs are anticipated to arise from the implementation of the recommendations.

6.1.1 The Director of Finance comments that there is sufficient budgetary provision to fund this project.

6.2.1 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

The Watford Borough Council, pursuant to arrangements made under Section 19 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Government (Arrangements for Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2000 with the Hertfordshire County Council, and in exercise of the powers conferred on that County Council under Sections 1, 2(1), 2(2), 4(2) and 32,35, 45,46,46a,49,51,53,55,61,99,100-102 to the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (“the Act of 1984”) and of all other enabling powers, and after consulting with the Chief Officer of Police in accordance with Part III of Schedule 9 to the Act of 1984, may make traffic regulation orders and implement proposals to manage parking on public highways and other roads. For some of the recommendations above it will be necessary to implement them via a traffic regulation order which, if objections are received, could lead to a public inquiry.

6.3 **Equalities**

6.3.1 **Equalities**

Watford Borough Council is committed to equality and diversity as an employer, service provider and as a strategic partner. In order to fulfil this commitment and its duties under the Equality Act 2010 it is important to demonstrate how policies, practices and decisions impact on people with different protected characteristics. It is also important to demonstrate that the Council is not discriminating unlawfully when carrying out any of its functions

6.3.2 A generic Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out for parking schemes which has been considered and approved by the Equalities Working Group. It is available to view on the Council’s website.

6.4 **Potential Risks**

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
Concern from residents of those street in favour of the scheme that no action is proposed may impact negatively on the reputation of the Council.	2	4	8
Emerging proposals from the recommended parking control reviews have significant revenue implications.	1	3	3
Those risks scoring 9 or above are considered significant and will need specific attention in project management. They will also be added to the service’s Risk Register.			

6.5 **Staffing**

6.5.1 There are no staffing implications from this report.

6.6 **Accommodation**

6.6.1 There are no accommodation implications from this report.

6.7 **Community Safety**

6.7.1 There are no community safety implications from this report.

6.8 **Sustainability**

6.8.1 There are no sustainability implications from this report.

Appendices

Appendix A St Albans Road Residents' Parking Scheme Stage 2 Consultation
Analysis March 2014 Mott MacDonald

Background Papers

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report. If you wish to inspect or take copies of the background papers, please contact the officer named on the front page of the report.

St Albans Road Area Parking Study; Parking Survey and Initial Consultation
Discussion July 2013 Mott MacDonald

File Reference

None