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Alderley Edge

Town Centre Parking Review

Report and Recommendations

Contents

1. Introduction: Scope and Objectives
2. On Street Control and Parking Provision
3. Off Street Car Parks
4. Enforcement
5. Residents Parking Schemes
6. Consultation and comment
7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Appendices:

- I. Map of town centre
- II. Benchmark Report: Summary Analysis

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1.0 Introduction, Scope and Objectives

1.1. This report sets out findings from a review of the parking situation in the town centre in respect of both on and off street parking and control measures.

1.2. The objectives of this Review are:

1.2.1. **To study the controls and facilities for parking in the central area of town and**

1.2.2. **identify changes needed to improve the provision, control and management of parking.**

1.3. It focuses specifically on the town centre (as defined on the map shown at Appendix I) in order to understand the effect of parking demand and supply on traffic circulation and parking for all vehicle users in a well defined central area.

1.4. This report summarises the analysis of the current controls and provisions for parking and makes recommendations for changes to improve both customer service and circulation through appropriate controls.

1.5. Management of public parking in the town centre consists of a combination of

1.5.1. on street restrictions and limited waiting provision, and of

1.5.2. provision of off street public car parks.

1.5.3. Control is exercised through Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) (under the terms of the Traffic Management Act 2004). Civil Parking Enforcement of both on and off street parking began in January 2008. Prior to this on street control rested with the Police who retain responsibility for enforcing against obstruction of the highway.

1.5.4. The enforcement service is provided by one team of up to 26 Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) (15 operating in the north area) and 9 Notice Processing staff covering the whole of the Cheshire East area.

2. On Street Control and Parking Provision

2.1. Limited Waiting Bays (LWB): These form an integral and important part of the total parking bay stock. Some of the streets (South, Massey, Brown, Stevens) have 1 hour only and lower occupancy, which appears to reinforce a need for 2 hours:

Alderley Edge	Limited Waiting Bay Survey					Feb-11		
			Tuesday			Thursday		
			Vehicle occupancy					
Location	period (hrs)	Approx Spaces	am	pm	Over-stay	am	pm	Over-stay
Stamford Road	2	21	11	16	0	15	19	0
London Road	1	18	16	17	3	17	15	4
West Street	2	4	3	4	0	4	4	0
South Street	2	15	15	15	2	13	15	2
South Grove	2	6	5	4	0	4	6	0
George Street	1	9	7	9	0	6	5	0
Chapel Street	1	2	2	2	0	2	2	0
Massey Street	1	2	2	1	0	2	0	0
Brown Street	1	8	4	7	0	8	4	1
Stevens Street	1	18	11	15	0	6	11	0

2.2. Clifton Street LWB. The bay outside 1-15 has been temporarily suspended pending completion of this review. Reinstating the restriction would remove commuter parking. There is also a strong demand for residents parking scheme in this street.

2.3. The on street Loading Bay restriction by Tesco Express has now changed to assist, and remove any confusion. The new TRO for this restriction took effect in June 2011. The Order removes the afternoon 'loading only' part of the existing Order, replacing it with "Loading only 7am to 10am and then 1 hour limited waiting from 10am to 7pm" and keeping the single limited waiting bay on Clifton Street.

2.4. South Street: the existing LWB may need to allow for residents' parking in some way, possibly through a dual use bay (see the Residents Parking section 5).

2.5. Lynton Lane: slightly out of centre, this lane is allegedly affected by commuter and other parking for local businesses, causing problems for access. There is some demand from residents to introduce restrictions here. It is not appropriate for a Residents Scheme as residents have adequate off road parking. Highways Engineers' state that a TRO was proposed in 2002 but was not carried out due to numerous objections. The parking issues are generally school related and so adding restrictions might not resolve the issue but rather, transfer it elsewhere nearby.

3. Off Street Parking:

3.1. **Parking Stock:** Capacity is limited given the number of businesses in the (relatively small) village centre. As in many such small centres there is a need to balance the needs of customers, with those of long stay parkers including workers; and to offer commuters an option to avoid parking in streets where other restrictions may be applied. Council operated car parks are:

Alderley Edge Public Car Parks

					Charges from Aug 19 2011						2010/11 p		
Car Park	Stay	Stand-ard bay	Disab led Bay	Total	up to 1hr	1-2hrs	2-3 hrs	up to 4 hrs	4-6hrs	up to 10hrs	Units	£ Sales	Turno ver /bay/d ay
Festival Hall	long	51	1	52	£0.40	£0.80	£1.80	£2.10	£2.60	£2.90	2666	£ 4,899	0.17
Parade	short	59	3	62*	£0.40	£0.80					69000	£28,000	3.75
South Street	long	45	2	47	£0.40	£0.80	£1.80	£2.10	£2.60	£2.90	33896	£52,057	2.41
West Street	long	20	0	20	£0.40	£0.80	£1.80	£2.10	£2.60	£2.90	7000	£12,000	1.12
Ryleys Lane (unadopted)	long	34		34	not charged								
Total		209	6	215									
	Long			168									
	Short			47									

* now 74 bays

3.2. Retailers and other businesses have cited lack of available parking as a constraint on customer footfall, and although this may be tempered when the findings of the recent Benchmark Survey are considered, the existing capacity requires improved management. Turnover per bay illustrates how capacity could be increased especially at the Hall and South Street. These figures are quite low by comparison with similar sites in the Borough.

3.3. **Physical condition** is variable with only the Parade car park being recently resurfaced by owners Bluemantle. This has also extended capacity to 74 bays.

3.3.1. South Street Car Park requires resurfacing.

3.3.2. West Street Car Park requires lighting and other security improvements.

3.3.3. Festival Hall car park is in particularly poor condition and is dealt with below. Signs and regulation boards have recently been improved by Cheshire East.

3.3.4. Ryleys Lane Park: Parking area : this uncontrolled space is roughly surfaced and would need considerable work to improve to adopted public car park standard.

3.4. Usage and Occupancy

3.4.1. **Ryleys Lane parking area** appears to be fully occupied from early on weekdays suggesting use by commuters and /or workers. If it were to be controlled, (most effectively through charging), this should improve availability nb for park users, and also generate income to cover costs of provision. Charges could be structured accordingly ie minimum charge for

short stay (3 hours?) with appropriate all day charge (currently £2.90 elsewhere in AE). The Parish Council have suggested control should begin at 10am and end at 3pm to eliminate commuter parking. However, two difficulties exist:

- 3.4.2. the possibility of a covenant on the land preventing use as a public car park; to be investigated.
- 3.4.3. the risk of displacement of commuter parking onto residential streets. Resident Parking Schemes currently requested for some adjacent streets may need to be established first.
- 3.4.4. Note that to effect control, a car park order will be needed. Macclesfield Borough Council once proposed this, but it was not approved and hence both Appropriation, and a new Order proposal and statutory consultation will be required.
- 3.4.5. **Festival Hall car park** is underused: measures are needed to improve management. It is operated under lease from Alderley Edge Parish Council, which may issue up to 92 free passes to several user groups and Parish Councillors, Hall and Library staff. This may be open to abuse and also restrict capacity for public paid parking.
- 3.4.6. The car park only makes £4000 income per annum, yet is a good option for more long stay parking. Any change would need to honour the arrangement to close the car park for the Music Festival (1 week per annum) and other Hall events by prior notice and arrangement. (The latter is controlled by Hall Management).
- 3.4.7. Ideally CEC Parking Services should administer all permit issues to ensure occupancy is controlled, still accommodating user groups (whose demands tend to be sporadic) while opening up to more long stay users from town. Resulting improved income could be partly used to improve the car parks condition.
- 3.4.8. The car park is in disrepair and needs investment to render it suitable as an attractive alternative for long stay parking. Current quotes for a comprehensive refurbishment are for £75000 for surface and lining work, and £30000 for lighting. Even with much increased occupancy, the payback period on such expenditure could be significant. However less costly essential repair work will be undertaken to at least render the car park more useable and attractive in the short term.
- 3.4.9. Directional signs to this car park from the town centre need to be improved.
- 3.5. **South Street car park:** this currently allows all day parking although located centrally and hence is crucial to customer (shorter stay) parking capacity. This should remain the case until other long stay parking is made available (see above) and is taken up, at which point South St occupancy should be reviewed.
- 3.6. **Parade and West Street car parks** are operated under contract from Bluemantle, the owners of the Parade. The contract for West Street is likely to be terminated shortly following a review with the owners.
- 3.7. In respect of the Parade, at time of this report the contract is subject to renewal. Should Council operation continue, the meter and signage will be adjusted to reflect the situation with West Street car park .

4. **Enforcement:** The objective of the enforcement team is to induce motorists and car park customers to comply with traffic management and car park regulations.
- 4.1. To do this, signs and lines need to be clear so that motorists can be in no doubt as to what is expected of them. Enforcement Officers have reported the following issues:
- 4.2. London Road needs new bay markings throughout and the bus stops require no waiting signs.
- 4.3. According to the TRO there is a LWB from the Bus Stop outside Nat West bank to the junction of Chapel Street; there are no markings at all for this bay.
- 4.4. South Street requires new bay markings and the renewal of lines also
- 4.5. Stevens Street needs new lines and also the bays need re-marking.
- 4.6. No Waiting signs are needed along West Street and the LWB sign needs securing into the ground.
- 4.7. Lydiat Lane is in need of new lines and signs.
- 4.8. Carlisle Street is also in need of relining.
- 4.9. The level of enforcement in terms of tickets issued (below) indicates a reasonable level of compliance. Figures across two years are partly affected by initial problems with available enforcement hours, though overall there is an underlying trend of improved compliance.

	PCNs Issued by town			Alderley Edge		
	yr 09 10			yr 10 11		
	On Street	Off Street	Total	On Street	Off Street	Total
April	144	125	269	154	58	212
May	130	141	271	126	45	171
June	147	77	224	186	60	246
July	166	126	292	247	139	386
August	130	118	248	66	29	95
Sept	143	178	321	82	50	132
October	155	118	273	85	30	115
November	101	104	204	72	51	123
December	88	65	153	65	42	107
January	64	43	107	56	31	87
February	80	54	134	66	45	111
March	121	66	187	104	59	163
Total	1469	1215	2683	1309	639	1948

4.10. However the level of displaced parking must be considered in certain “hot spots”. This is reflected in requests for residents’ parking schemes.

4.11. **Provision for Disabled Drivers:** the Off Street Order allows customers displaying a valid Blue Badge to park without charge within any bay on a Council operated car park. Of the total of 215 off street bays in the town under public control, 6 wide disabled bays are offered, below the national guideline minimum of 5%. In view of Cheshire East’s current policy of not charging any disabled customer, 5% should be sufficient. Given the fact of unlimited off street parking already, along with 3 hour permitted parking on street, this shortfall is mitigated.

5. **Residents' Parking:** there are a number of locations and streets where conflicting needs of residents and visitors to the town are causing some difficulty. These fall into two categories:
- 5.1. Streets with mixed residential/business use close to the village centre.: these include South Street and Clifton Street where limited waiting bays exist to provide extra capacity during trading hours. In these cases surveys have been undertaken to assess the needs.
 - 5.2. Mainly residential streets further removed from the centre, experiencing displacement parking. These are the subject of requests for Schemes currently and include the following:
 - 5.2.1. Lydiat Lane may be considered due to complaints of bad parking. It currently has dotted yellow lines (very faded) which are not enforceable as established under old legislation. The restriction could be replaced via a new TRO. However the problems appear sporadic and a resident scheme may be more pragmatic if supported widely.
 - 5.2.2. Carlisle St/Thurston Green Zone: this potential Scheme has been well researched and set out by some residents. It is an appropriate location and so a formal consultation and survey have been progressed together with design. Main zones to consider are:
 - Zone 1: Clifton Street, Alderley Edge
 - Zone 2: Carlisle Street, Thurston Green, South Terrace, Lydiat Lane, 1-29 Chorley Hall Lane, Alderley Edge

6. Consultation and Comment:

- 6.1. **Cheshire East Councillors, and Parish Council:** Meetings with Parish Councillors have been held at which the issues dealt with in the analysis above, and recommendations, were discussed.
- 6.1.1. In respect of residents parking, the Parish Councillors were concerned that schemes proposed were properly consulted upon with local residents, and this has been built into the scheme design process. They emphasized the need to consider likely displacement of vehicles from residents schemes and to prepare for the management of such issues where they were predictable.
 - 6.1.2. They also felt that any proposal should be part of an overall parking management review and this is what is intended from this review, although other aspects such as speed limit review are beyond the scope.
- 6.2. **Local Business Group: Alderley Edge Traders:**
- 6.2.1. A meeting was held with representatives and letters received. Issues cited included the need for more time in limited waiting bays, change to the Tesco Express Loading Bay, (now complete), separate ticket machines on Parade/West Street car parks, and a resolution to parking problems around Clifton Street. They also wished to see improved provision for town centre workers including permit parking off street. They were concerned to see a solution for residents which did not adversely affect street parking for customers very close to the main trading area.

6.2.2. It is felt that the recommendations in this report go some way to addressing all these points.

6.3. Police:

6.3.1. Comments received were in agreement with recommendations on the Festival Hall and Ryleys Lane car parks, the change to LWBs and the residents parking schemes. The officer responding was concerned that a wider consultation beyond the residential streets included in the scheme should not jeopardize the schemes which address genuine problems for the residents.

6.3.2. Improved maintenance and upkeep of signs and lines would be a “great help”. The officer also favoured introduction of some additional lines on Eaton Drive and around the problematic junctions on Ryleys Lane and Brook Lane. The parking around the schools is often dangerous and is his primary parking concern.

6.4. Town Centre Benchmarking: A Market Town Benchmarking Survey was carried out in Alderley Edge by independent consultant Mike King on behalf of Action for Market Towns. This highlighted key performance measures both from businesses and from visitors and shoppers, summarised at Appendix 1.

6.4.1. The survey of businesses highlights some familiar issues and cited parking as the main area for improvement. All their other responses appear to indicate that the economy of Alderley Edge is healthy and at least stable if not progressing.

6.4.2. The results of the survey of customers and visitors show broader concerns. Although the aspects which visitors would most like to see improved do include parking, the most important aspects needing improvement are said to be

6.4.3. the tidiness and cleanliness of the town, and

6.4.4. an improved variety of shops.

More references were made in total, to these two aspects, than to car parking.

6.4.5. The extent and nature of this survey is unclear, but it does illustrate that while parking issues are important, other issues are clearly very significant to customers as well. Parking difficulties can have an effect on the attractiveness of the town but not necessarily be the key factor influencing customers’ decisions as to whether or not to visit.

6.4.6. It is well established elsewhere in the country and abroad, that where variety and uniqueness of the retail offer is good, customers are not generally deterred by sensible parking controls or reasonable charges. It is clearly most important to visitors to find clean and attractive towns with a good variety of shops.

6.4.7. However the issue of total capacity and availability of parking bays is important, and may affect future footfall if not well planned and controlled. In Alderley Edge capacity on council operated public car parks is 175 bays with space for approximately 103 further vehicles in on street limited waiting bays. The Consultant’s survey identified a total of 693 on and off street spaces, with 72% of these (499) off street. The majority of these are private and will serve individual businesses. His occupancy figures relate to this total. However it appears to reinforce a view that the issue in

Alderley Edge may be more about efficient control than total capacity available. For these reasons the measures proposed at 2.0 above are important.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

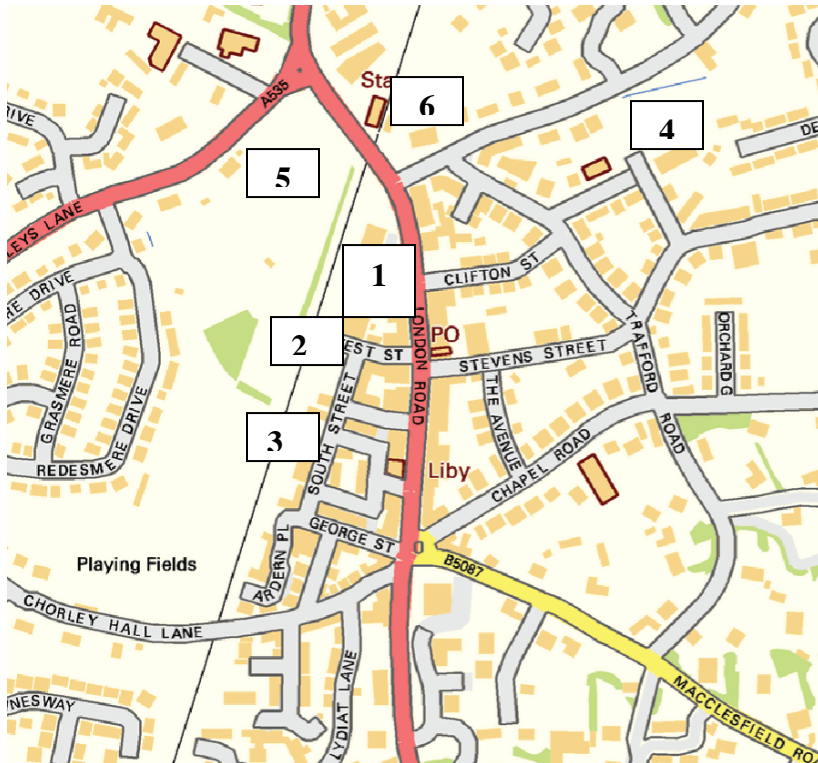
There are grounds for improving the on and off street management of parking in Alderley Edge, to improve circulation and occupancy whilst reducing contraventions. These measures should help to improve footfall in the town centre.

- 7.1. Off Street capacity could be improved through investment and improved control of Festival Hall and Ryleys Lane. The legal background to Ryleys Lane to be researched with a view to adoption as a public, controlled car park, within the next 9 months
- 7.2. Festival Hall management should hand over administration of permits to Cheshire East Council. Existing permits to be honoured until renewal date, then replaced, on application and approval, by Cheshire East permits.
- 7.3. South Street car park long stay occupancy to be monitored and its status reviewed following improvements to other sites above.
- 7.4. West St car park to be removed from Council operation as a public car park owing to condition and the wish of the owner.
- 7.5. On street capacity may be improved through changes to Limited Waiting Bays length of stay to 2 hours, other than in London Road which should remain 1 hour. i.e.:

Stamford Road
 West Street
 South Street
 South Grove
 George Street
 Chapel Street
 Massey Street
 Brown Street
 Stevens Street

- 7.6. Improved maintenance and upkeep of signs and lines (as listed at 4.0 above) for on street restrictions should lead to better compliance, in turn helping to reduce congestion and delay to motorists looking for parking space.
- 7.7. Two Residents Parking Schemes may be beneficial if planned in combination with the other recommendations for off street parking. Confirmation of majority support from residents of the streets will be crucial, followed by design and implementation work by both Highways and Parking sections.
- 7.8. The establishment of resident schemes should ideally take place as close as possible in time as improvements to the Festival Hall car park, and with changes to the Limited Waiting Bay periods.

Appendix 1 Alderley Edge Town Centre



Car Park Locations

- 1 Parade
- 2 West Street
- 3 South Street
- 4 Festival Hall
- 5 Ryleys Lane
- 6 Station (not Council)

Appendix 2 Town Centre Benchmarking: Survey. Summary of results

Firstly, in respect of **businesses** *:

- The mix of Comparison and Convenience shops matched that of the region and national averages.
- A much higher % of independent traders than regional/national
- A higher occupancy (96%) of units than reg/nat.
- Very much higher average rent levels
- Car parking occupancy lower than regional/national average, especially in the quieter periods, with illegal parking higher than average.
- All businesses surveyed had been established over 10 years, double that of the regional norm
- Most businesses say turnover has increased against last year, with most also saying profits have increased or stayed the same
- Most see turnover remaining the same for the next 12 months
- The main positive aspects of trading in town are geographical location, the town's prosperity, and the potential for local customers.
- The main negative aspects are seen as the retail offer mix, rents and property costs, and parking
- Most businesses would like to see the town centre improved through improvements to parking.

Secondly, this is backed up by the findings of the **survey of customers and visitors**, as follows*:

- Visitors are somewhat younger on average than regional/national average
- The majority are convenience shopping
- The majority visit daily or more than once a week,
- and a majority by a small percentage, visit on foot. (the rest by car). This is a big contrast to the regional /national norm.
- The great majority visit for less than 2 hours
- Although the aspects which visitors would most like to see improved do include parking, the report lists a much wider range of issues they would like to see addressed. These are analysed from the report's list, below:

Alderley Edge Visitor Survey: Count of Main Responses*	
Item	Responses
free parking	5
more/improved parking	8
no parking restrictions/wardens	2
remove parking in town centre	1
improve look/cleaner tidier town	11
more variety of shops	32
more for younger people	2
traffic calm/pedestrianising	4
fill the empty shops	4
fewer bouncers at night	1
more multiples (eg M+S, River Is)	2
reduce shops' rates/rents	1
leisure facilities	3
improve post office	2
Co-op Area- general improvements needed	4

*Source: "Market Town Benchmarking: Measuring the performance of town centres; Alderley Edge Report" February 2011: auth. Mike King Senior Research Consultant, for Action for Market Towns