

Notes from meeting about parking

Wotton-under-Edge Civic Centre

1 August 2008

Present: Paul Smith, Town Mayor

June Cordwell, Chairman of Town Regeneration Partnership

Glenys Sykes, Town Clerk

Alex Wilkinson, Chairman, Chamber of Trade

Gareth Kitchen, Chamber of Trade

Kelvin May, Stroud District Council

Nick Fenwick, Stroud District Council

Jill Fallows, Stroud District Council

Purpose of Meeting: To discuss parking problems in the town and possible solutions.

Parking problems in the town centre were discussed and the concerns of the Town Council and Chamber of Trade that these acted as an economic constraint on the viability of the High Street.

Three things could be tried to tackle these problems:

Maximise use of existing parking.

Modify policies that exacerbate the problems.

Look for additional off-street parking.

Maximising use:

It was thought that patrolling by Parking Attendants had a beneficial effect in making sure that people moved on from the short stay parking areas, thus releasing spaces for casual shoppers.

The down side was that people who received a fine for overstaying did not come back again but went off to other areas where there is more parking.

Consideration could be given to making a modest charge for parking in the town centre. This usually had a definite effect on stopping vehicles overstaying. It was noted that, although some other towns in the District made charges for town centre parking, Wotton-under-Edge tended to compete with Yate and Thornbury in South Gloucestershire where there were large free car parks.

The current lease of the Chipping Car Park to Stroud District Council would expire in 2012 and the Asset Management Plan would consider whether to retain the lease after that date.

Consideration could be given to amending waiting restrictions in the Chipping Car Park, so that more or all of it was subject to a two or three hour limit from 9am to 5 or 6pm. This might cause problems for some companies based in the area whose employees currently parked there during office hours. This would make the Civic Centre Car Park the main long stay car park, though it was noted that it was usually full during the working day at present, so that this would not create any new spaces and would add to pressure on the CC car park.

[Stroud District Council to consider amending waiting restrictions in Chipping.](#)

The layout in the Chipping could also be reviewed to see whether it could be realigned to provide more spaces. This would be a relatively cheap option.

It was suggested by the Chamber of Trade that the grassed area at the top of the Chipping could be removed and made over for parking though this area was not currently included in the lease to Stroud District Council. It was pointed out that the Town Trust, which owned this area, would not necessarily agree to this suggestion as many people valued this green space in the town centre. Stroud District Council would assess how many additional spaces could be provided on this site.

[Stroud District Council to review layout of Chipping](#)

It was suggested that consideration should be given to zoning other streets around the town centre to restrict parking times, as it was in Bear Street. The Town Council was asked to suggest streets which might be suitable for this. Traffic orders would be needed, however, which could delay implementation considerably. This would also imply an enforcement cost as the existing enforcement staff were already thinly spread.

[Wotton-under-Edge TC to consider possible zoning areas.](#)

Modify policies that exacerbate the problems.

It was noted that so called “car free development” policies promoted by the Government bore little relation to reality in Wotton, as the standard of public transport provision to the town was such that it was not possible for most people to work outside the town unless they had at least one car. Many households had two or more. Planning permissions for supposedly “car free” developments had exacerbated the parking problems in the town centre as there was no way of enforcing this condition. It was estimated that such permissions had created a need for between 50 and 80 additional parking spaces over the last five years. The specific problems of Wotton-under-Edge were recognised by special provisions in the District Plan but even these had been overridden by a planning permission within the past year. It was not clear how these policies could be strengthened at present.

Additional parking:

It was noted that much of the land immediately surrounding the town was owned by family trusts who had been approached previously and who appeared to be prepared to hold the land indefinitely in the hope that at some point development for housing would be permitted. Approaches from the Town Council to purchase land for civic purposes, including the provision of amenity space, had met with complete failure. It appeared unlikely that any additional land would be available on the edge of the town for parking provision.

Stroud District Council had done a quick estimate of the costs of adding another layer to the Civic Centre Car park. The cost for an estimated additional 20 spaces was a minimum of £250,000. It was generally agreed that this was not a feasible prospect.

The Chamber of Trade suggested that the former Stokes Bakery site could be converted for

parking. This was still in Renishaw's ownership and the company were understood to be considering proceeding with the existing permission for company housing on the site.

Another site which had been considered previously was the car park of Wotton Auction Rooms, where there had previously been suggestions that traders could park there on non-auction days though the views of the Directors were not clear. It was agreed that the Town Clerk would arrange a meeting between the Directors of the Company, representatives of the Town Council and the Chamber of Trade and Nick Fenwick to see whether a scheme might be possible.

[Wotton-under-Edge TC to arrange meeting.](#)

An arrangement for traders to use the car park of the Royal Oak had been explored in the past but had fallen through. It was agreed that the Chamber of Trade would approach the current landlord to explore this option again. One possible option here would be for companies requiring long stay to contract with the landlord to reserve a given number of spaces for their employees who could be issued with permits. This could be a way of securing a number of long stay spaces for local businesses without major capital outlays.

[Chamber of Trade to approach landlord.](#)

It was noted that the Chipping Manor had a large parking area in front of it which frequently appeared to be unused. Although access was required at all times for the undertakers based in the premises, it could be worth exploring with the owners whether some spaces could be used by arrangement. An informal approach to the owners could be made by the Town Council.

[Wotton-under-Edge TC to approach owners](#)

It was agreed that another meeting should be held on 19th September at 10.00am to discuss progress on these various options.

Glenys Sykes
Town Clerk

Wotton-under-Edge