

Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure, Roads Services, Road Safety and Traffic Management Team

Summary of objections received during the public consultation and thereafter a response from roads officials

Please note the comments below are not indicative of the number of objections received, and have been chosen as they highlight recurring themes throughout the correspondence received.

Objection 1. General objections received to the proposals

- "The change in parking arrangements seems ill advised and somewhat cynical in that it's only aim is to provide extra income from 'easy targets' and no other considerations have been taken into account."*
- "Motorists appear to be seen as a soft target when additional revenue has to be raised and on the pretext of traffic management and environmental issues we are constantly burdened by additional taxes which we can ill-afford"*
- "I realize that financially Aberdeen City Council needs to raise extra finance but this plan may well lead to a real problem for many citizens wishing to attend concerts, theatres and activities in the city centre"*
- "Forgive me for being cynical but it does smack of a revenue raising scheme with no obvious advantage to the citizens who already provide very substantial amounts through Council tax"*
- "I see no justification for these proposals, and therefore have to conclude that it is nothing more than a money making exercise."*
- "If the proposals (to remove the free parking arrangement from 6.00 p.m.) are approved it would mean something of the order of £2.50 per evening added to the cost of classes for individuals attending. As a result it is fairly likely that our classes would collapse." (RSCDS)*
- "Many of the choir are pensioners and as evening bus services are poor they feel the need to bring their cars as we do not finish our rehearsals until 9.30"(Aberdeen Orpheus Choir)*
- "Public transport is not a viable alternative for many of us. Buses are infrequent in the evenings and women do not like walking around dark streets, especially on cold winter nights"*
- "The change of times will mean that any visitors we have, who arrive beyond the normal office working hours, will now have to pay."*
- "The changes in times will not significantly reduce the number of cars using the city centre, given that there is no associated increase in alternative transport"*
- *"If a person's working hours dictate that they have to be parked on street in the city centre until beyond 6 O'clock, they will just pay the extra or time their payment period till 6 O'clock and then move to the single yellow line areas."*
- "the real problem was lack of parking spaces available rather than shoppers / members of the public taking up residents spaces"*
- "the council are increasing the parking meter charge which is also unacceptable."*
- "When the general public purchase a Parking Permit they don't realize the amount of Parking Permits the council have already sold to the general public and I am quite sure the council aren't too concerned either as the revenue generated from the permits is ploughed back into the public purse without too much concern as to whether there are enough spaces to go round at any time of the day or night."*
- *"With the extra workload of 131 streets / roads etc to police I am sure the 7pm to 10pm shift to police throughout the city "hotspots" for vehicles parked on double yellow lines and other road offences will not be policed any better than it is being policed at the moment"*
- "There is no traffic management argument to justify asking people to pay for parking on Upper Denburn"*
- *There is no comparability argument that the proposal is needed to bring Aberdeen into line with other Scottish Cities"*

Officers Response

The purpose of the on-street parking proposals is to improve the residential parking amenity for the residents within the city centre.

The magnitude and attraction of the city centre has changed significantly from when parking zones were originally introduced into the city centre in the 1980's. At this time, the zones were established to help the customers and clients of the businesses by freeing up parking spaces by encouraging parking turnover. Parking restrictions were set to match standard business hours, however, in subsequent years there has been a drive towards encouraging sustainability and providing for residential amenity.

In recent years, the Council has received complaints from residents of the city centre complaining about parking availability. The residents have complained because they have to pay £80 for a parking permit for restrictions which operate

between 8am – 6pm. These residents take their cars to work and return after 6pm and are therefore competing for parking spaces with visitors to the city centre. They question the worth of paying for a parking permit when they receive very little benefit, other than at weekends.

Property density is a primary cause of the parking problems however the proposals will help residents by giving them some priority over other visitors to the area. The proposals will not stop visitors from parking in the marked bays but they will give permit holders easier access. It is true that residents' visitors will be affected but they will have access to the book of scratch card tickets that residents can purchase every year, or in some zones there may be the possibility of using the flexible permit.

The available kerbside for parking is limited and, in some central zones, more permits are issued than there are marked parking bay spaces available. That is why the permit numbers are restricted to one per property in the inner core zones and two in the other zones. The number of parking permits issued is based on eligibility and entitlement.

The extension of the daytime single yellow waiting restrictions was initially considered but this aspect was not progressed because it would have reduce the parking capacity between 6pm and 8pm and would equally affect residents and visitors. It is accepted that visitors will be more inclined to park on the single yellow lines; however this is considered acceptable outwith peak hour traffic.

Whilst it is acknowledged that public transport is not acceptable for all occasions, the City Centre does have the best links available within the City.

With respect to the off-street car parks, the proposals are for the extension of operational hours to 8pm and the introduction of a flat fee of £1.50. These car parks are facilities provided by the Council and it is considered that a nominal cost is reasonable. The proposals are comparable with car parks operated by private companies within the city and are comparable to car parks operated by other local authorities.

Objection 2. Aberdeen Bridge Club, and Scottish Culture and Traditions,

These objectors have been combined into one category because they are all relevant to one particular parking zone; zone P. The central theme of these objections is the evening use of the streets and the lack of residential properties within the zone.

The largest numbers of objections received were from Aberdeen Bridge Club; this club owns the building at 14 Rubislaw Terrace, which is within zone P. The members of the club object on the grounds that there are no residential properties on Rubislaw Terrace or on Queens Terrace and there are no cars parked on-street after business hours.

Due to the demographics of the club and the lack of available public transport, the members have stated that close proximity parking is essential for the club. If approved the proposals would significantly increase the cost of playing Bridge and would potentially jeopardise the future of the club. The members have

objected to the proposals overall but have also requested consideration as to the removal of zone P or Rubislaw / Queens Terrace from the proposals.

-“Every evening of the week, approximately 60-80 members turn up to play Bridge at the Club, the majority of whom are Senior Citizens and some with the disabilities associated with this group”

-“Players travel from the outskirts of the City to play bridge at the club and the use of Public Transport is not a viable alternative, as the prospect of all these senior citizens standing around at bus stops on Union Street and Albyn Place at the end of play, which is between 10.30 and 11.00pm, beggars belief”

-Rubislaw Terrace has a “minute residential population. After 6.00pm there is only a handful of cars parked in the street and this is clear to club members,”

-“Parking costs which are now free will cost £3.90 per evening (the table fees per evening are £2.50)”

-“The future of the club and many other societies and groups in zone P would lose their membership and the citizens of Aberdeen would be deprived of the enjoyment they get from their meetings”

-“There are next to no residents. The street is practically empty in the evening, unlike during the day when all the businesses are open.”

Scottish Culture and Traditions is a local charitable organisation supported and funded by both Aberdeen City Council and Scottish Arts Council. In addition to highlighting the absence of residential properties in Rubislaw Terrace and on Albyn Place, they have stated

-“The proposed extension of parking charges to 8.00pm could have a serious effect on attendance at our classes. Many of our participants are elderly and others are on limited income which entitles them to concessionary rates. They would be faced with the prospect of paying a parking fee of £3.90 per car to comply with this new regulation, and may not enroll as a result. This would affect not just them but also others in the same class, as the organisation has to have a viable number in each class to enable it to run.”

Officers Response

It is agreed that Albyn Place, Rubislaw Terrace & Queens Terrace have very few residents and therefore current evening parking levels are negligible. However, these streets are in parking zone P which is very close to the city centre, and there is potential for displacement from the adjacent parking zones N, C and possibly the Summer Street, Chapel Street and Golden Square off-street car parks

This zone is possibly the smallest parking zone in the city and it is on the periphery of the proposals, but it does contain residential streets and officers do believe that it is close enough to the city centre to suggest that its omission could lead to problems in these residential streets.

The “micro-management” of individual streets, whilst now theoretically possible, would result in significant difficulties when managing and enforcing restrictions. A lack of consistency would result in an increase in parking appeals, resulting in increasing levels of administration. It would generate disparity between streets causing complaints from members of the public.

Objection 3. Queens Cross Parish Church / Gilcomston South Church

Queens Cross Parish Church is located within Zone N; the church’s objection is based on the evening use of the church by volunteer organisations, and the subsequent effect on the community if these proposals are progressed.

-“The Girl’s Brigade meets on Tuesday evenings from 5.30 to 8pm and the leaders arrive at 5pm to make their preparations. They will, from the date of the new order, have to pay for three hours parking. On Wednesday, Beavers meet at 6pm and Aberdeen Youth Music Theatre at 7.30pm. On Thursdays, Brownies meet at 5.30 until 7pm with a similar situation arising on Fridays when the Cub Scouts meet from 5.30 until 7pm. All these uniformed organisations experience difficulty in sourcing leaders and the extension of the Pay and Display times is an unjustifiable penalty on the volunteers who organize these groups.”

Gilcomston South Church is located within Zone C; the church’s objection is based on the evening use of the church by volunteer organizations, and also on various details of the proposals.

-A number of our meetings in the Church buildings on Summer Street are held on a weekday and weekend evenings after 7pm and so visitors and members will be charged for attending at a time when public transport is poor"
-“The charge is likely to reduce citizens’ use of city businesses, such as restaurants and community facilities”
-“There is no promise of service, such as toilet access or security attendants, to accompany the extra service charge. These necessary services are reasonable to expect if one is paying for parking”
-“The proposed charges appear to be discriminatory. A typical visitor to HM Theatre, using the Denburn car park from 7pm till say 10pm, need only pay 75 pence whereas a visitor to our church for example, using the Chapel Street car park from 7pm till 10pm, would have to pay £1.35”

Officers Response

Queen’s Cross Parish Church is located on the edge of parking zone N, adjacent to zones P and L. Zone N consists of some of the highest density residential areas within the city and is very close to the city centre. There are existing evening parking problems within zone N and any potential displacement into this zone would cause significant problems.

Although currently out of commission the church does have a car park, also the proposals do not extend into the adjacent zones L, T or X. Therefore it is likely that the limited number of evening users could utilise these streets without causing undue problems.

Gilcomston South church is on Union Street in the centre of core parking zones. The church has raised the issue of disparity between the Denburn and Chapel Street car park. Both of these car parks are classed as long stay car parks; in that they have numerous parking spaces and turnover is not as vital so longer stay parking is permitted. The shortest available ticket in all long stay car (except the Denburn) is two hours, the Denburn had a one hour tariff added because of the associated Medical Centre and also to allow a short stay facility for the parents of Robert Gordons pupils. Therefore if a driver is to park at 7pm until 10pm it will cost £2.25 in the Denburn but £2.85 in all other long stay car parks.

With regard to the objection stating that there is no service provided, it is suggested that there is currently no charge for a service that is provided. As stated, private companies do charge for parking in the evenings and overnight.

Objection 4. Northern Arts Club

The Northern Arts Bridge Club have raised similar objections to those of the Aberdeen Bridge Club, stating the demographics of the club members, the unsuitability of public transport for its members and the potential affect of the proposals on the club. The club has also highlighted that Bon Accord Square is a business area with very few residents.

Officers Response

Again it is agreed that Bon Accord Square consists predominantly of businesses however this is not the case across the zone as an entity. Zone C is a core zone and approximately 130 residential permits have been issued for this zone. The omission of this zone would result in displacement from the car parks and other adjacent parking zones.

Objection 6. Aberdeen Performing Arts,

Aberdeen Performing Arts and a number of other objectors have objected to both the proposed extension of the operational hours on and off street and also the proposed introduction of the overnight charge. The general concern is that

parking charges will deter people from attending venues such as the Arts Centre, Lemon Street, Music Hall or His Majesty's.

-“The majority of performances in these venues start at 7.30pm or 8pm and customers normally park between 7pm and 7.30pm. The proposed changes to charges would mean that our customers would face a charge for parking until 8pm and another charge for overnight parking. This could add up to £3.50 to the cost of their evening out”

-“These additional parking costs would be a significant disincentive to coming to our venues and that if implemented would seriously impact on our business”

-“The same sort of situation arises in the Arts Centre and Lemon Tree areas – parking there is gradually being eroded and so people wishing to attend events in these venues are discouraged from doing so by the difficulty in parking. Many cannot afford the cost of taxis”

-“Attendance at Aberdeen's main places of entertainment, viz. HM Theatre and the Music Hall will undoubtedly be affected, will they attract sufficient audiences to make these venues profitable if their patrons have to search even harder for a parking space prior to a performance”

-“Instead you should be encouraging the use of the city centre by making it more affordable to be there for the innocent pleasures of the non-inebriated members of the public”

Officers Response

As above.

Objection 7. Golden Square

Objections have been received to the transfer of management of the Golden Square car park, these objections include;

-“I have been advised that buildings in Golden Square with frontage to the inner car park have permission to park in the inner circle (legal documents dated back to the early 1900's)”

-“Public transport does not allow me to visit my clients at the time and dates suitable to them as I can be in several locations within the city at any given time on any given day.”

-“I require a car as an essential tool to my work frequently transporting large volumes of files to and from home”

-“The absence of a car parking space on the terms which are currently available to me is likely to be instrumental in any decisions with regard to continuation of work within Golden Square.”

-“My objection is based on the fact that The Local Authority have no right to impose any charges in relation to this area and that the charges suggested are excessive”

-“I require the use of my vehicle for employment purposes which can often include attending at clients' addresses and residential establishments throughout Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. My clients can be elderly or infirm and unable to attend at our offices and my visits are often requested at short notice thus precluding my use of public transport.”

Officers Response

The legal questions regarding the ownership and operation of this car park have been resolved; objections based on this aspect of the proposals are not valid.

Aberdeen has numerous businesses of varying nature distributed throughout the City Centre and the businesses located in the vicinity of Golden Square are no different. Each business should consider how it operates and should look towards encouraging more sustainable methods of transport. If required, Aberdeen City Council officers can offer advice and assistance with this process.