

MINUTES

Meeting to discuss parking permits in Barden area with TMBC Officers

Tuesday 7th August 2018

In Attendance Barden Residents Association: Mark Hood (Chair), Lucy Athey (secretary), Martin Coulstock
TMBC Officers: Andy Edwards (Head of Technical Services), Andy Bracey (Parking Manager)

Background: The meeting at Kings Hill was held to discuss the continued parking issues in the Barden area, focussing mainly on the distribution of business permits allocated to the area which continue to contribute to the existing parking problems for many residents. We wished to discuss the decisions made (without consultation with D2 residents by either officers or councillors) after the latest Joint Transportation Board meeting on 11th June 2018. See link for minutes of this meeting and the associated documents; <https://democracy.tmbc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=164&MId=3537&Ver=4>

The decision made at the JTB meeting was that as they come up for renewal over the next year permits for Commercial-Office parking (i.e. those in River Lawn Road) will be restricted to specific underused roads like Barden Park Road and permits for Commercial retail/showroom businesses (like Hendy Ford and Abel Alarms) will again be allowed to park within D1. It is believed this will reduced parking pressure at the D1/D2 boundary in the daytime. Businesses will also be offered the option of a parking permit for long-stay car parks, this will be at a reduced rate for two years on the cost of £950 p/a but would still be considerably more than the £160 it currently costs to buy a business permit for Barden.

1. Mark informed AE & AB of our proposals, namely that **all business parking permits are removed from the Barden area**, and presented them with the results of our residents' survey to help illustrate the strength of public support for this. AE stated that the problems in the area are complex; businesses in River Lawn Road having permits is a separate entity but businesses operating within the area (e.g. Hendy Ford, Abel Alarms) arguably have a need to park within the area. They discussed the decision made at the JTB meeting (see above) and emphasised there would be a consultation and survey in a year to see how many businesses have taken up the new scheme (moving to Barden Park Road or back to D1) or how many have chosen to park elsewhere/taken up the offer to park in council car parks. Regarding our concerns with allowing businesses to park within D1 again (a problem that was only alleviated by their decision the previous year) they said they have closed off the zone to residents who have a business there and that businesses are in essence resident within that road. To fully remove all River Lawn Road permits would require them to undertake a further consultation of 12/18 months and it is not a decision they can simply make though they did admit that once all the current solutions have run through they *may* get to this point. MH asked why River Lawn Road businesses need to park so close to their place of work and AB agreed that they do not need to but again reiterated it would take 18 months to consult on this. MC reiterated that removing business permits completely would not inconvenience them in terms of location as there are plenty of council car parks within a very short walking distance.
2. A further complication is that they must deal with many areas within Tonbridge & Malling; they are currently undertaking reviews in Kings Hill and Hildenborough and phase 10 of the parking action plan – all this will have to be dealt with before they revisit D1 and D2.
3. Before making the decision, they undertook a snapshot survey of daytime parking within D1 and D2 which looked at estimated capacity for cars, number of cars parked and how many of those were business permits. This took place over five separate occasions over two weeks in April and the highest number of business permits in D2 at any one time was 21. This survey will be undertaken again within a year to see if any impact has been made.

<https://democracy.tmbc.gov.uk/documents/s30810/Annex%20%20%20D1%20D2%20Business%20parking%20permits%20surveys.pdf>
4. MH asked if they could inform us who makes the decisions, either the members (elected councillors) or officers like themselves. AB clarified that the options voted on were drawn up by officers in consultation with local members (Councillors Peter Bolt and David Cure) and then voted on by the wider board of members/councillors at the JTB meeting.

5. MH presented the officers a list of current and future developments in or on the boundaries of the zone that we foresee having a further negative effect on parking in Barden including the following:
 - Residents are concerned about owners of flats in the new Copper, Steel and Iron blocks on Avebury Avenue being able to purchase a residents' permit if they have more cars than their allocated single space in their car park. We were originally told they would not have access to residents' permits but a recent test case may force a change in the law. The officers are aware there potentially could be changes in the future, but this is not currently something the new residents are able to do so they will assess this issue if it arises.
 - The new medical centre adjacent to River Lawn is a future problem as it is widely recognised that it will not have adequate parking, this would inevitably force patients to seek out spaces in D1 & D2 (outside of restricted times) rather than pay to park in council car parks. The TMBC officers are concerned about this as they will be losing income from the 5 spaces in the adjacent car park. They are also concerned about the loss of revenue in Avebury Avenue as not many town people were using this area to park – it may be that park services in the future could revert back to resident parking.
 - We also made them aware of the proposed development of 14 flats on Avebury Avenue (above the gym, in the old nightclub) which will only have 7 car park spaces. We asked if those remaining 7 flats would be able to purchase a residents' permit, but they were unsure of the answer. AB made a note to look into this and suggested a letter be written to planning.

Unfortunately, they are not able to look at future potential problems when making their decisions, they are only able to react to problems after. MH emphasised how frustrating this is for residents that TMBC are unable to be more proactive rather than reactive, as the issues above (among others) will exacerbate problems down the line. AB informed us that parking for new developments is not under their jurisdiction but decided by a Kent County Council highways impact assessment.

6. MH reiterated that although businesses would be made to pay more if they were removed from residents' parking this would be of financial benefit to the council and in their best interests. He queried whether members are content to continue to let them park at such a discounted rate to the detriment of residents.
7. Although this is not planned for any time in the near future, officers said that due to the ongoing complications Zone D would be the first they would consider excluding from the business permit scheme.
8. MH provided the officers with a list of proposed additional spaces that could be created within zone D (these were all suggested by residents via our Facebook group). AB to look at these and compare to the restrictions laid out by the Highway Code and see if they are viable. He informed us that they have recently added one in Preston Road.
9. MH raised the issue of marked parking bays (as this is often discussed on our Facebook group and in meetings). The officers informed us that studies show you lose spaces when these are put in place. There is only a benefit if there is a two-car space split as this stops cars parking in the centre of the space.
10. MH asked why times and restrictions (such as applied to Holford Street and Danvers Road) were not rolled out throughout the zones. AE stated it was what residents of that area asked for in a previous consultation.
11. AB will get in touch with us in 3 months' time to let us know if any changes have taken place and AE asked that we all meet again in person in 10/11 months once the current scheme has bedded in. We can look at the results of their next survey and discuss how the new amendments to the scheme has affected the parking for residents.