

# REPORT TO STOCKBRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL ON THE RESULT OF THE PARKING POLL CONDUCTED BY THE TRAFFIC PARKING GROUP

## 1. Background

1.1 On 29.10.18, Hampshire County Council (HCC) published a 10-page Decision Report from the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment approving "the principle of future parking on a full cost recovery basis". In summary, the report states that if a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) is applied for to HCC by Stockbridge (or by any other Parish Council) to apply some control to our/their parking, that application would only be considered by HCC in line with the principles laid down in that report. Those principles make clear that HCC would seek to set up and then control a parking regime not only on the basis of its being self-financing, but also on a no-half-measures basis, meaning the non-optional introduction of wardens, lined parking bays, meters, charges and penalties, and annual parking charges for residents. The report also makes clear that there would be no room for negotiation for special cases.

1.2 8 months later it was reported in the Hampshire Chronicle on 12.7.19 that HCC had made a profit of £12.8m in the previous year from parking charges.

1.3 In the light of these developments, the following questions arose for consideration by SPC:

1.4 Since a parking regime could only be introduced by a formal TRO, would HCC have the power to step in and impose one on Stockbridge, whether we wanted one or not? We asked Roger Tym, upon whose expertise in traffic and planning matters we are lucky enough to be able to draw, who replied in an email of 29.8.19,

having considered the primary legislation in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the Dept of Transport's "Draft Guidance for New Procedures for Traffic Orders" (Jan 2012), that:

"The Highway Authority (i.e. HCC) must consult with Parish Councils and with any other body it deems necessary (including District Councils).....The legal definition of 'consult' appears to be much the same as is found in the OED - it does not carry the right to sustain an objection.....in certain circumstances a public inquiry may be held under an inspector, presumably appointed by the Secretary of State for Transport....."

In other words, he wrote,

"Yes, the CC could impose TRO's for.....parking restrictions.....for which it would have to 'consult' and possibly be subject to objections at an inquiry, which may or may not be sustained....."

1.5 Further matters relevant to background were:

1.5.1 We realised that SPC had no idea whether the principle of parking restrictions imposed by HCC on Stockbridge by what would amount to diktat rather than through a genuine, bilateral consultation process would be welcomed or rejected by our electors. Council agreed that we needed to know the answer to that question, because if HCC approached us intending to impose a TRO setting up a parking regime, we had to know whether to fall in with their intentions or start a consultation process putting forward our electors' objections, even though HCC would not be bound to follow those objections, merely to "consult" us

1.5.2 Inquiry showed that our predecessor TWG had considered conducting a poll such as the present one but decided against it,



because at the time a parallel issue regarding a major development advanced by McCarthy & Stone was becoming a separate important local issue, and it was feared that the two issues might become entwined perhaps leading to a skewed, unreliable result on the single parking regime question.

Our predecessors we know gave detailed and lengthy consideration to the parking question in its widest form, and we acknowledge gratefully the benefit we have derived from studying their efforts. They reached the stage of wishing to agree a form of bespoke, negotiated parking regime with TVBC (called, we believe, "Stockbridge-lite") and there was talk of enlisting the support of Caroline Nokes MP in these negotiations. At least one meeting with her was either arranged or discussed, but timetable difficulties intervened and no progress in this direction was made. (We understand she remains interested and anxious to help). The baton has since been passed from TVBC to HCC and the rather more uncompromising approach featured in HCC's 29.10.18 report seems no longer to favour any bespoke, negotiated solution. Nevertheless, we wonder if some way round this might yet be negotiated with HCC, especially if our MP is supportive.

It should be said that 3-4 years ago, TVBC made further parking available by enlarging the layby on the A30 between the two roundabouts in order to provide a further 34 spaces. This extensive and expensive further work was intended to provide parking for the employees of High Street traders, thus freeing up further space in the High Street for traders' customers. It occasioned some displeasure in the ranks of TVBC when the new spaces were insufficiently used because employees continued to park in the High Street as close to their places of work as possible.

1.5.3 We proposed to SPC that the present poll should be conducted, asking the single very simple question whether those consulted were in favour of parking controls on the High street, yes or no. We proposed to make clear (1) that the type of parking controls we were seeking views about were the no-half-measures controls (what our questionnaire background called "the full works") proposed in HCC's report of 29.10.18; (2) that the poll should be a "Stockbridge only" poll and those consulted should be the residents and traders (meaning the managers or proprietors of businesses, not their employees) living or operating between the Trafalgar Way junction and the Longstock cross roads, i.e. by and large High Street dwellers and operators only. Obviously the poll could have been greatly extended to other roads in Stockbridge itself, and to outlying villages. But what was required was not at this early stage a detailed and lengthy consultation of perhaps 1,000 people centrally or peripherally affected (that could come later), but a snapshot yes/no poll on a simple question from the group of people probably with the best-qualified, longest and most helpful experiences of life on the High Street. That approach was approved by SPC.

## 2. Methods Adopted

We distributed approximately 100 2-page voting forms to households and businesses on each side of the High Street, the first page containing a Yes/No box for the answer to the question "Are you in favour of parking controls on Stockbridge High Street?" with an open space for comments, and the second half-page explaining why the poll was taking place. The 100 forms were distributed one per household, which in some cases has led, helpfully, to two



occupants replying or commenting. The yes/no answers were treated as single answers, so we have in effect received one yes/no answer per household/business.

### 3. Results

We have received a total of 55 poll forms returned, with perhaps a few more still due to appear. We have considered whether to round up stragglers by knocking on doors and asking for unreturned forms, but decided against that. First, a return of well over 50% is in sample terms not a bad response and we think is sufficient for our "snapshot" purposes. Second, any detailed doorstep inquiry as to why the form has not been returned could lead to embarrassment or, worse, confrontation, and would be, we consider, unnecessarily intrusive. The returned forms, of course, are available for inspection.

### 2. Numerical Results of the Poll

Of the 55 returned ballot papers received, 34 were from Residents and 21 from Traders.

Of the 34 Resident returns, 23 replied No and 11 replied Yes.

Of the 21 Trader returns, 11 replied No and 10 replied yes.

There was thus an overall majority (before separating residents from traders) against the introduction of a HCC-type parking regime of 34 to 21. Residents (23/11) were more strongly against than traders (11/10).

### 3. Opinions Expressed

In many ways, this is the more interesting part. Nearly all respondents wrote helpful comments mentioning problems which seemed to have struck different people in broadly similar ways. From these comments we have identified a number of similar themes, which in summary are:

1. Untidiness in parking leading to available parking space being wasted;
2. Widespread misuse by different groups of people of available space;
3. The probably unfavourable impact of any parking regime (whether strict or not) on the town's trading future and/or amenity advantages, compared with the present free and easy unregulated arrangements (in effect, this is the "no" view expanded in the comments section);
4. The desirability of some kind of additional parking space being provided to supplement the existing on-street spaces.

We examine each of these themes in more detail.

#### 1. Untidy Parking

This was frequently mentioned by both residents and traders, the suggested remedy being some form of bay-marking. While that sounds simple, a problem may lie in the fact that vehicle sizes nowadays vary so widely. The area abounds with what in London

are called "Chelsea tractors" whose size contrasts strikingly with, for example, a Peugeot 106 or a VW UP. On the old principle that the speed of the convoy is the speed of the slowest ship, it appears that bay markings, if they are to be uniform, would all have to be such as to accommodate the larger, or largest vehicles, in general use.

Valuable practical work on this was conducted by resident living roughly opposite the Three Cups. He found that the standard parking bay for most car parks was 2.4 metres. Using that figure, he measured the distance between the 3 Cups driveway and Queensland House and found it sufficient for 22 parking spaces. He then on several days counted the number of vehicles parked along that stretch and came up with 18, 19, 18, 17, 18, 16, 18 and so on, concluding that most days there was room for 3 or 4 extra vehicles, sometimes even more.

He extended these researches to the other side of the street. He then discovered that in an area good for 114 spaces (without interference with the no-parking areas), poor or undelineated parking led on a regular basis to many fewer cars being parked than were possible. One day he counted only 99 cars in the 114 -space area actually having been parked.

This point, mentioned enthusiastically by both residents and traders alike, seems a good one.

## 2. Misuse (Abuse)

Analysis of the comments made by the many people who mention this suggest that it takes 4 forms:

2.1 The actions of one particular resident who for a considerable time now has used the parking space in Trafalgar Way as a repository



for parking vehicles which he uses in his business. The numbers seem to vary but are seldom fewer than 6 and often more, plus a trailer or two. Two elderly red Jaguar saloons usually feature in his congregation and sometimes these have been left so long unmoved that their tyres have gradually deflated. The police told the previous SPC that provided the vehicles were taxed and insured (and they all were), no offences were being committed and the police were powerless. The resident argues that he is doing nothing wrong and is perfectly entitled to park where he lawfully can, and it is not an offence to use public parking spaces for his own advantage to save himself the cost of business car parking. The fact that it is antisocial and offensive to hijack public parking facilities for one's own personal advantage (we paraphrase some of the stronger comments we have had orally and in writing on this subject) is, it is argued, neither here nor there. The fact remains that after several years he is still abusing the public parking facility because in a town where the public parking is well known to be under pressure, he has commandeered for his personal use apparently on a permanent basis a number of spaces which properly are intended for the public. (We have had no reports of any other resident behaving similarly).

2.2 A few years ago, TVBC instituted road-widening on a stretch between the two roundabouts on the A30 on the eastern edge of Stockbridge. The object was to provide 34 additional spaces for the public, but principally for employees of the traders who, because they would be arriving for work early in the morning and therefore well before any take-up by the visiting public, would be the de facto beneficiaries of these new spaces. These new spaces have not been taken up by the employees with the enthusiasm that was hoped for. Some of the traders have been in a position to insist (and to make it a condition of employment) that their employees use these spaces to



park, but by no means all and we have had much adverse comment about the general lack of occupancy which seems to have always beset these 34 spaces on most working days. The employees would say that the attraction of walking between quarter and half a mile from these new spaces to their workplace on a cold wet November morning is not great, when they know a space can be found this early to park much nearer to their workplace. Our respondents have said that if the employees worked in London, they would be used to hopping off the tube and walking in all weathers some distance to their workplace, so why not also in Stockbridge? Still, one can see it is not an easy selling point for an employer to make to a prospective employee.

One respondent asks that lorries are debarred from using the layby as it "defeats the stated object" We agree.

2.3 The practice of dormitory parking (or car pooling) seems to be widespread and much criticised. However one describes it, it consists of a person with no personal or working connection with Stockbridge driving here at about 0700, parking his car, then being picked up by a workmate or employer who will return him to retrieve his car at the end of the working day. With parking now in Winchester costing £15 a day and therefore £75 for a 5-day working week, a working year of, say, 43 weeks, amounts to an annual cost of £3150. Free parking in Stockbridge is therefore worth arranging.

It is extremely difficult to know, without organising a kind of private early-morning detective agency, just how widespread this is. For about 3 or 4 years now, a Ford arrives and parks at the east end of the High Street most mornings and its driver is picked up 15 minutes later by a builders van with a Romsey trade name and phone number

on the side. This man returns every day (it's unclear how) at about 4.30 and picks up his car. Today, on this particular day (Wednesday 11.3.20) at 1130, parked at the north-east corner of the High Street are (1) the aforementioned Ford since 0700 today, (2) a white Audi RO12EOE left unmoved for 4 days since 7.3.20, (3) a black Nissan RO17XNW here unmoved since 0915 yesterday (it displays a Dec 2017 parking permit from somewhere unspecified), and (4) a Mercedes LO64JZW, first recorded here at 0750 yesterday and unmoved since. Whether or not these are all abusers, they are certainly deeply suspect.

Getting the evidence of the extent of this practice is difficult and ultimately pointless as there is nothing one can do about it because, once again, nothing unlawful is being done. A Vine trader says it is widespread, writing "I have personal experience of people carsharing in the early hours for Grately or Winchester stations...." Another nearby trader, "...I particularly wonder if Peter Symonds students do this, or indeed leave their car in Stockbridge and travel into Winchester on the Symonds bus. Then we would have an idea of how many spaces are taken up in this way..."

This mention of "the Peter Symonds bus" relates to the fact that bus no.16 (Broughton to Winchester) caters for the PS pupils and delivers them actually into the college campus, later returning them to Stockbridge and Broughton. Some of the pupils with driving licences may be encouraged by their parents to drive themselves into S/b, leave their car here, then pick it up at the end of the day on return. Once again, we have as yet no hard evidence, but we intend to find out. The fact that so many of our respondents refer to what we have termed "dormitory parking" suggests that it goes on, perhaps on a larger scale than we realise. One respondent says "any free waiting time for visitors must be capped to a time limit...so that



those people who abuse the free parking are no longer able to". We agree.

3. Other comments which should be quoted before we pass on are:

"The free unlimited parking really matters to my business...." (A Vine trader)

"Many people would no longer visit Stockbridge - I hear from so many who live outside that they love the freedom to shop and then have lunch, staying longer and spending more than they planned...." (resident)

"Alternative free parking is essential for Stockbridge's businesses....all rely on car fed customers, not worrying if their car is being penalised..." (resident)

"No cars, no Stockbridge" (resident)

"A definite No to controlled parking - it would kill the High Street as seen in other towns in Hampshire....there is adequate parking, maybe not outside the shops visitors are aiming for." (resident)

"Controls of any kind would be disastrous and ruin Stockbridge's economy and ambience" (resident)

"Stockbridge works because of this mix of residential and trade" (resident)

"If parking were controlled...it would impact on trading. In time it would have a negative effect on house prices and be very difficult for residents having visitors" (trader)

"More parking space is required" (trader)

"We feel a car park would benefit Stockbridge, but where?" (trader)

"Parking can be troublesome on the whole people manage. I feel it will change the character of S/b which at present is a gem!"  
(resident)

"Just parking bays. Parking fees would ruin the High Street. Many customers comment on the unique status of the High Street" (trader)

Finally, there were many "No" returns from residents on the basis that they didn't see why they should have to pay to park outside their own houses, and a universal thumbs down from the businesses at Clarendon Terrace who say they only came because of the free parking. Some say they will consider relocating if that changes.

#### CONCLUSIONS (Subject to further discussion between the two authors)

1. The result of the poll indicates there is no mandate for SPC to apply to HCC for a TRO to introduce a parking regime.
2. Therefore any move towards improving the present position should, it seems, be concentrated on increasing the present number of spaces.
3. We think that at this early stage it is worth attempting to achieve this by first introducing the right system of bay-marking, and also at the same time removing some or all of the present misuses. The latter would involve (1) enforcing more use of the 34 new spaces between the 2 A30 roundabouts; (2) stopping those with no direct Stockbridge connections from abusing the system by bringing an end to dormitory parking; and (3) stopping the one-man abuse of the Trafalgar Way available parking spaces.



Two questions therefore: first, how many more parking spaces would these measures produce? And second, how might they be brought about?

### HOW MANY MORE SPACES?

In the absence of evidence, we must resort to intelligent guesswork. As to dormitory parking, we suggest (subject to further investigation of the Peter Symonds bus question) that perhaps about 6 to 10 spaces a day are abused in this way (so say 8); add the extra spaces derived from tighter bay parking (say 10 extra for the whole street); add another 8 for the Trafalgar Way misuse; and say a further 10 for further use by employees of the 34 A30 spaces. That gives  $8+10+8+10 = 36$  extra spaces. Of course any estimate based on guesswork is debatable, but 36 spaces is the equivalent of a not insignificant extra car park.

### HOW TO EFFECT IT?

1. What is required is, we suggest, a brief mid-morning period during which a parking permit is required for any non-resident, failing which a penalty is incurred. If notices were posted reading, "Parking in Stockbridge is free, except for from 10 to 11 when any vehicle not displaying a resident's permit will be subject to a penalty charge", such a notice would at a stroke clear away (1) the abuse of Trafalgar Way, (2) the dormitory parkers and (3) reinstate the A30 spaces for use by employees. This limited 1-hour parking charge could be enforced by a roving inspector who would do his rounds on unpredictable, random visits say 2 or 3 times a week with power to impose penalties as was done (perhaps still is) in Overton. His main

weapon is the unpredictability of his patrol.. The harvest he reaps from those fines would be sufficient, one imagines, to defray the relatively low cost of introducing this system, and so would not infringe HCC's code requiring parking regimes to be self-financing. It would be necessary to issue windscreen permits to residents and maybe to established regular morning parkers, at no charge to them.

2. This idea has one apparent objection, which is that on the one hand a vote of electors has shown an aversion to a HCC-type of parking regime for which a TRO would be required, yet here we are advocating proposals for which a TRO would still be required from HCC (carrying with it perhaps the risk of HCC acquiring a taste for a Stockbridge TRO and later imposing a more strict one of their own choosing).

The answer to this is surely that while we asked our electors if they wished to have imposed on them a HCC-type full-on parking regime and they replied no, they did not tell us that they were happy with things as they are and did not want anything to be done. We have, we hope, identified correctly those things which they indicated in their "comments" that they wanted dealt with, but in order to carry out their wishes we have to seek a TRO. This should not create an impossible obstacle.

3 A further problem which would need addressing is that because all categories of misusers would react by leaving the High Street and Trafalgar Way and transferring themselves to the side streets, we risk only moving the problem from one part of the village to another. It would therefore be necessary to issue residents' windscreen permits to the residents in side streets as well as the High Street, indeed probably to all residents in Stockbridge. In addition, as



already mentioned there would be the problem of legitimate overnight visitors and occasional but legitimate early shoppers visiting, e.g. the Co-op. How would they, once parked for 10 or 15 minutes at say 0800 but unprotected by a resident's windscreen card, escape the attentions of the roving inspector? It would no doubt emerge from discussion and debate how these difficulties could best be handled, but they are surely not insuperable.

To be continued, and discussed further.

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11th March 2020.

