



## **WESTERN AND SOUTHERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 8 APRIL 2021**

**Present:** Cllrs Mike Barron, Dave Bolwell, Kelvin Clayton, Susan Cocking, Jean Dunseith, Nick Ireland, David Shortell (Chairman), Sarah Williams, Kate Wheller and John Worth.

**Also present:** Cllr Jon Orrell - Dorset Council - Melcombe Regis

**Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):**

Philip Crowther (Legal Business Partner - Regulatory), Paul Hutton (Service Manager for Parking Services), Anna Lee (Service Manager for Development Management and Enforcement), Carol McKay (Senior Definitive Map Technical Officer), Elizabeth Murray (Strategic Parking Project Manager), Patrick Carpenter (Traffic Engineering Technical Officer) and Denise Hunt (Democratic Services Officer).

**79. Election of Vice-Chairman for the meeting**

Proposed by Cllr Susan Cocking, seconded by Cllr Nick Ireland.

**Resolved:** That Cllr John Worth be elected as Vice-Chairman for the meeting.

**80. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Louie O'Leary and Bill Pipe.

**81. Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Nick Ireland declared an interest in Item 6 on the agenda as a member of the Petitions Panel that had made recommendations in relation to the Park District area parking permit. He would not take part in the debate or vote on this item.

**82. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed at a future date.

**83. Public Participation**

Representations by the public to the Committee on individual planning applications are detailed below. There were no questions, petitions or deputations received on other items on this occasion.

**84. Application to divert parts of Footpaths 23 and 24, Owermoigne at Lower Watercombe House**

The Committee considered an application to divert parts of Footpaths 23 and 24, Owermoigne at Lower Watercombe House as shown on Drawing P205/20/1.

The Senior Definitive Map Technical Officer presented the application and recommendations and responded to technical queries. She confirmed that the current "walked route" had not been considered due to the landowner not being in favour of this option for reasons of privacy and security.

Members discussed the consequences of reopening the definitive footpath if the application was refused, as well as discounting of the "walked route" option by the landowner. There was particular concern regarding the water meadows with a request for appropriate land drainage along the proposed route.

Legal advice was provided that the committee should consider the proposal before it and whether this met the statutory legal tests rather than whether there was a better legal alternative.

Proposed by Cllr Nick Ireland, seconded by Cllr Dave Bolwell.

**Decision:**

That:

- a) The application to divert parts of Footpaths 23 and 24, Owermoigne at Lower Watercombe House be accepted and an order made;
- b) The Order include provisions to modify the definitive map and statement to record the changes made as a consequence of the diversion; and
- c) If the Order is unopposed, or objections are withdrawn, it may be confirmed by the Council without further reference to the Committee.
- d) If objections to the Order are received and are of a similar nature to those already considered by the Committee it may be submitted to the Secretary of State for confirmation without further reference to the Committee.

**Reason for Recommendations:**

- a) The proposed diversion meets the legal criteria set out in the Highways Act 1980.
- b) The inclusion of these provisions in a public path order means that there is no need for a separate legal event order to modify the definitive map and statement as a result of the diversion.
- c) Accordingly, the absence of objections may be taken as acceptance that the proposed diversion is expedient and therefore Dorset Council can itself confirm the order.

In the event that objections of a similar nature to those already considered in this report are received to the order, the Committee will have already considered the objections in the light of the legal criteria and therefore it may be submitted to the Secretary of State for confirmation without further reference to the Committee.

**85. Park District Area Residents Parking Permit Zones A and C**

The Committee considered a proposal concerning changes to the resident parking permit in Zones A & C of the Park District Area of Weymouth, Dorset.

The Service Manager for Parking Services gave a presentation to members and three of the written statements received from members of the public were read out at the meeting. All of the written statements that were received are attached as an appendix to these minutes.

Cllr Jon Orrell - Dorset Council - Melcombe Regis, addressed the committee concerning the central issue of too many permits for the number of parking spaces in the area. He considered that the recommendations were the right balance as they gave residents the opportunity to park near their homes as well as a nearby parking area for guest house and hotel guests.

Members asked whether it would be possible to extend use of the Swannery Car Park to residents who were unable to find a space in the residential area; whether the number of electric charging points could be increased and the duration of the Covid testing area in the car park.

They were informed that a current review of parking permits sought to address the principle of use of nearby car parks by resident permit holders; that increasing the number of electric charging points would be fed back to the electric vehicle project team and that the Covid testing site would be moved to an alternative location in the Weymouth area at the start of the Summer period.

A proposal to include Lodmoor Car Park in addition to Swannery Car Park for visitors staying in guesthouses and hotels in the permit area was supported by the Committee.

Proposed by Cllr John Worth, seconded by Cllr Susan Cocking.

**Decision:** That having considered the representations received, in response to public advertisement, that the Committee be recommended to support the proposed changes to the Park District area residents parking permit zones A and C as follows:

i) That establishments within the Zones A & C areas of Weymouth identified as Hotels, Guest Houses, Holiday Homes and Air B & B's be provided with a like for like allocation of permits (should they wish to purchase them) for the Swannery Car Park and Lodmoor Car Park. Guests visiting these establishments will still be able to park outside the property to drop off their

luggage and check-in before receiving a permit and re-positioning their vehicle into the Swannery Car Park.

ii) That all residential establishments be restricted to a maximum of 2 permits per household. All units in Houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) would need to be considered individually for the purpose of allocation.

iii) That residential properties with private driveways be excluded from the scheme or set at a maximum of one, subject to point ii) being agreed.

iv) That the one-hour maximum wait is confined only to the periods between 9am – 6pm, thereby allowing visitors to businesses to continue, with residents only and no one-hour wait between the hours of 6pm and 9am.

**Reason for Decisions:** To increase available parking spaces for residents who live in the Park District resident parking permit zones A and C area. It is considered that the benefits of the scheme outweigh the potential impacts on local businesses, from continuing with 1-hour wait bays and providing car parking for holiday accommodation guests at the Swannery Car Park at no extra cost.

86. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

**Duration of meeting:** 10.00 - 11.25 am

**Chairman**

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## **Western & Southern Area Planning Committee - 8 April 2021 Written Submissions**

### **Application to divert parts of Footpaths 23 and 24, Owermoigne at Lower Watercombe House**

#### **Ralph Holmes, Open Spaces Society**

The Open Spaces Society has three main concerns about the application to divert footpaths 23 and 24 at Lower Watercombe House.

Our first main concern is that all the diverted paths would be on water meadows. If the diversions were onto good quality well drained grassland it could be a very attractive option for walkers, but most water meadows get wet and potentially muddy in rainier spells, especially between October and March. It is certainly clear from the species of plants growing and the way livestock's feet have sunk into the mud that these water meadows get wet. To make matters worse, most of the diversion being suggested runs immediately next to the drainage ditch in the lowest parts of the fields. It is fully accepted that Dorset Council will not confirm the order until the applicant has carried out improvements to the drainage and surface of the proposed route, but will Dorset Council's limited budget be able to pay for the upkeep of these in say 5 or 10 years time?

Our second main concern is the very important safety issue of having to walk through fields with livestock including bulls. 75% of the current route is fenced and completely free of livestock. The remaining 25% is relatively safe as the field there is relatively wide and livestock can easily disperse. In contrast 100% of the proposed route goes through open fields with the possibility of livestock. Of particular concern is the extremely worrying safety issue walking north towards point C. Here the field narrows considerably and livestock could get funneled into this area and panic as walkers approach.

Our third main concern is the loss of visual amenity from the proposed routes. The current route of path 24 is particularly attractive, especially alongside the lake. From the proposed diversion it is not possible to see this. Instead it is simply walking across a fairly uninteresting field. The views from the current route of path 23 are also very good ones across open meadows with woodland in the background. The proposed route of path 23 passes very close to Hope Wood. It is true that Hope Wood is a

very interesting and attractive SNCI. Not only is it impossible to enter it, but it is almost completely impossible to even see the wood. Good views of it are blocked by the very uninteresting vegetation alongside the proposed path. In addition there is a ditch and a barbed wire fence. The Open Spaces Society agrees that there should be some diversion of path 24 near Lower Watercombe House. The route actually being used is a good compromise, but we would be happy to consider other routes, eg nearer the lake.

## **Park District area residents parking permit zones A and C**

### **Karen and Martin James**

This planning application is already outdated due to Covid. Now that the public are unable to travel abroad at this current time, Weymouth will be more popular and demand for holiday stays and day visitors will increase. Putting more strain on the Swannery Car Park. The reduction in Public transport due to Covid and government advice to travel in your vehicles has not been taken into account with this consultation.

Guest Houses actually located in the Park District (Zone A) will be at a business disadvantage as a number of Seafront Hotels have car parks for a number of guest cars and an abundance of permits to use at the swannery, or located nearer to the Swannery Car Park on a better, safer walking route than those located in Zone A. Guest Houses have been discriminated against as other businesses in the Park District that are still entitled to parking in the residential zone. Without car spacing the Park District, there is still a potential of 131 spaces wasted. This will still be an issue as not being addressed, so the Council are happy to waste spaces than create spaces.

The congestion of The Esplanade and King Street is a massive problem during the summer season, as a resident of the Park District, drivers will use the Park District as a cut through to avoid this congestion and therefore by pushing more traffic in that direction the problem will just be worse in both areas. The Swannery is the favoured car park for day visitors and there will not be enough spaces for guest house visitors in peak demand times, the Council will need to offer permit holder spaces or use of the permit in other Council car parks or divert day visitors to Lodmoor and Beach car parks to avoid no parking being available for holiday guests. Currently the Covid Testing site is taking up many much needed spaces. The most important point is safety, due to high increase in ASB over the last 12 months in the area, that until the planned Dorset Council ideas for the train station area have come to fruition, asking guests to walk past ASB hot spots, drug dealing, street drinkers will have a detrimental impact on our reviews for our businesses and Weymouth's reputation. As a local resident, I would not walk from my guest house to The Swannery Car Park after dark and I do not feel comfortable asking our guests to do so. This decision to take away parking for guest houses in the Park District will possibly increase the number of HMO's making the area more deprived, yet would increase the number of residential permits required!

## **Mr & Mrs Edmondson**

I have owned a small family run guest house called "the marjune" on Lennox street, since 1995. We have had many loyal customers returning year after year. We even managed to maintain some custom through 2020 during the corona virus pandemic. However, I am writing to you today to highlight my concerns with the removal of parking permits for guest houses in the park district. I feel that this will impact our trade to a point where we cannot continue to operate.

A few years ago, Zone C started to be allowed to park in Zone A. Which is quite unfair as some hotels in zone C have their own car parks. The parking permit system used to work well. but now they seem to sell far more permits than cars could feasibly park in the area. It is our feeling that parking in the area could be resolved in a way which is less detrimental to our trade.

1 Sell less visitor permits some years back we were alloted one permit per 2 rooms. it worked; A zone was just for A zone. not with C zone included.

Instead of on street parking, our guests will be told to park on the swannery car park, which for a healthy adult is around a 20-minute walk from our guest house. For our elderly guests this will be unfeasible and no doubt will influence them to go on holiday elsewhere. Also, the loss of smaller guest houses will no doubt impact the trade of the remaining local pubs and restaurants.

A lack of local business trade and fewer family run guest houses will no doubt contribute towards the further decline in the local area. As a small guest house, we are already forced to compete with many large guest houses who have their own car parks. Taking away our parking permits will make staying with us impractical and unwelcoming to most travellers.



## **Teresa & Mark Bowers**

When the report makes assumptions & omits addressing the following highlighted (Not all) pertinent reasons for the increased competition in parking we fear little will be gained:

2012 parking policy changes created the problem as it significantly reduced the then availability of parking within the zones.

The required need to be satisfied that the permit applicant is a resident and the owner of the vehicle, Mi Permit does not. Airbnb owners can use this loop hole, registering their own cars to their Airbnb property in the Park District and then changing the registration weekly for guests.

Severe lack of compliance & enforcement.

The over issuing of permits by Dorset Council to businesses that were unable to provide the basic information required, a copy of business rates and room plan, has been a factor to the demand of parking in the area.

Poor parking is one of the main problems within the Park District, spacing the bays would help significantly, yet this has not even been considered. This will still be a problem as not addressed Example: bay that can accommodate 4 cars easily parking poorly means only 3 cars can park, with 526? Spaces available parking this way potentially means 131 spaces are lost?

Until these are addressed, the strain will remain as the opportunity to continue the above will be increased.

To use the impact of Covid-19 that was not present at the time as a defence for recommendations is shameful, as is not recognising the provision of accommodation during this time by Guest Houses for Key/Critical workers that benefits Weymouth residents & vital work programmes at an affordable rate (they don't receive even half of £87+ allowance) and assuming no significant impact is wrong.

How can something be reviewed that may impact on future stringent restrictions , when most of the issues that have led to the parking complaints have not & continue not to be addressed as it is left unmeasurable , in turn this reads like a threat. Had the changes from the 2012 parking policy & later introduction of Mi Permit been reviewed then we would not be where we are now. However to help, future policy should

not allocate any permits to brown site conversions that do not provide adequate onsite parking.

Pleased to learn that priority at The Swannery will be given to Guest House permits, does this translate into allocated spaces per permit? If not, further parking options (with permit) should the Swannery be full are needed for avoidance of demand in unrestricted areas.

Guest Houses are not operationally the same as large hotels/lets therefore the impact is different.

### **Nick and Caroline**

We feel that the two main causes to the issue of parking in Zones A&C have not been covered in your report.

1. The parking policy made in 2012 made significant changes to the original scheme (introduced in early 2000's which had worked well). Under the new policy Residents were able to buy unlimited permits, the allocation for Hotels and Guesthouses remained the same, (1 permit for 3 rooms for seafront properties) with the exception of those with car parks who were previously ineligible.

2. The introduction of Mipermit caused two significant issues:

- V5 documents were no longer checked meaning residents' permits can be purchased for vehicles not registered to an address in the park district.
- Enforcement became almost impossible for parking attendants due to the time taken to check each car.

In section 6.15 of brief holders report it states that 'audit work has been completed to establish if permits were issued erroneously' however it does not disclose the method and depth of the checks or the results of this audit. Communication with and regard for Hoteliers has been poor throughout this process. The Community Centre who have been involved throughout the history of the scheme and will be aware of the changes, sought to blame and exclude accommodation providers from the outset. Completing the petition by calling door to door but missing out properties deemed to be the cause of the problem.

The following factors conspired to mean that by the time the consultation took place the decision had already been made:

- The preclusion of the Hoteliers and Guesthouses from the petition, discussion around the parking issues and any possible resolution.
- The secretive manor in which the petition was collected, support garnered and opinion swayed.
- The wording of the consultation which directed participants to the solution to their problems.
- Hoteliers and Guesthouses are in the minority and were an easy target we feel we were not able to get involved.
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The wording of the letter from parking services dated 14/12/2020 led people to believe that the matter had been agreed and was now closed. This has led to fewer objections being submitted and the issues that would have been raised not covered in this report.

Smaller hotels and guesthouses with a small number of permits who have been part of the scheme since it was introduced are furthest from the car park and will feel the biggest negative impact on their businesses. The distance to the Swannery will impact on infirm guests, not eligible for blue badges and will stop many from rebooking.

We would welcome the opportunity for an open honest discussion with all parties to find a resolution that works for all.  
The Seaham supported by WHGLA

## **Neil Wale**

Following recent proposals to change the issuing of car parking permits for the Park District Guesthouses, I would like to put forward a strong objection to this.

As a key business owner based on Lennox Street I must state that this will have a detrimental impact to my business and will cause me loss of custom. A key selling point when visiting the area is to be able to safely park where you are staying. This monetary loss, coupled on top of Covid lockdown losses would mean we would potentially have to close down, having a further detrimental impact on a struggling area.

I feel the impact on guest safety and property would also be huge; the recent increase in anti social behavior means walking through the Park District is not a safe thing to do especially at varied hours when guests arrive night and day and cars being parked at the Swannery will be easy target for burglary and vandalism as it is an unsecured area. Any incidents, once made public, will have a lasting negative on Weymouth's Tourism

Industry. The 10-15 minute walk is unpractical for elderly, those with young families, mobility problems and other disability issues, meaning we are forced into being inaccessible for all guests.

A proposal such as this will also add to the congestion in the area; and anyone who lives here already knows The Esplanade, Queen Street, King Street and Radipole Park Drive are already an issue. This will also pose possible health risk to families, children and the beach area, due to air pollution for traffic jams.

The problem we have, have been increased when large hotels were given huge amount of permits (even those with car parks) to park in Zone A & C. Those with no other parking options should have been the only Guesthouse / Hotels who were given any permits in the zone and I suggest that to ease permit issues hotels with parking have permit options revoked. AirBnB's are not included or self catering holiday homes in the Public Notice, therefore is it just Guest Houses / Hotels that are losing permits?

This does not seem like a fair proposal for all.

During the main summer months and weekends if no spaces are available at the Swannery due to day visitors, where do our guests park? Any other options for parking are so much further out that people would not be willing to walk the distance back to the Guesthouse - another reason not to book to stay meaning loss in income.

### **Peter Howarth**

This is the 3rd time ,once at a council meeting and twice in writing .

I am still of the same opinion. The obvious problem is the council issuing around 700 permits for 500 spaces ,also allowing households to have too many permits .And perhaps allowing the large Hotels on the Seafront to have permits when they have either built on their carparks or us them as beer gardens or suchlike.

As is have said in every communication before , if the Council were to paint bays at the correct length of a parking space instead of carrying on parking so badly and inconsiderately, i think there would be at least 10% more spaces, leaving 6of 8 feet either end of their car is downright rude , they should be made to take their test again.

## **Shirley James**

I am Shirley James, secretary at the Park Community Centre in Melcombe Regis. I was at the Petition Panel meeting on the 22nd January 2019. In principal we felt the Business and Hotel permits available, but only in Town Centre Car Parks and the sliding scale of charges for permits will improve the parking for people in the area.

It has been difficult to say how it has been working for 3 reasons.

1. Lockdowns and semi lockdowns.
2. More cars static by day, due to working at home.
3. We haven't had the usual summer experience.

Even so people in the area are more positive about parking than when we had the Petition.

I feel a better time to assess outcomes would be in the Autumn when a semblance of normality may have been possible. We would be willing to help with that.

Thank you all for your time, our experience with the petition was very positive.

## **Clifford Gallagher**

The town of Weymouth is very dependent on tourism and a great deal of B&Bs are located in this area. Myself and my wife have conversed with a few other owners and strongly believe that completely getting rid of parking permits for our guests was not really the solution to the problem. We are all residents here and want to operate in harmony with other local home owners. Perhaps offering permits limited to 50% of a guest house's capacity would have been a better option.

Speaking from my own personal perspective and having run the Cornubia Guest House for the past couple of years, I carried on in a similar vein to the previous owners and inherited a lot of their regular clientele, of which the vast majority would be considered senior citizens. This is why I feel that the Swannery Car Park is not the ideal location for them to park.

I shall look forward to hearing the final proposals from the meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> April.

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