Proposed changes to Northampton Pay and Display parking Zone

PKG/ 1759

Traffic Regulation Order Delegated Decision Report

23rd October 2018
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<th>Issue/revision</th>
<th>Issue 1</th>
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Delegated decision - Part 1
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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Summary sheet of objector’s comments.
Appendix 2 - Full record of comments received through public notice period.
Appendix 3 - Final proposal plan 1 of 3 (S802/18/03 v2)
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Background Documents

1. Northamptonshire County Council Cabinet Report - 19th Dec 2017
2. Equality Impact Assessment 2nd Feb 2018
3. Northamptonshire County Council Cabinet Report - 28th Feb 2018
5. Northampton Consolidation Order 2018 – Amendment 1 (Statement of Reasons 27th September 2018)
1. **Purpose**

1.1 To report the outcome of the Public Notice consultation for proposals to make a number of changes to how paid parking is provided within the Northampton Town Centre Pay and Display Zone.

1.2 To determine the outcome on whether to proceed, or make amendments to the proposals in light of the responses and objections received within the 21 day formal notice period. The County Council’s constitution permits that any resolutions agreed through this report will be made under a delegated decision by Mr David Grindley, Asset and Traffic Manager.

2. **Background Information**

2.1 In February this year, Northamptonshire County Council agreed its budget for 2018-19 and the medium term plan (to 2021-22), which included making a number of changes to how on-street parking is provided within the Northampton Town Centre Pay and Display Zone. As a review of the parking provision within Northampton Town Centre has not taken place for several years, and with changes to patterns of behaviour within Town Centres, there is a demand to ensure that on-street parking is efficiently managed.

2.2 Under the proposals, the days where parking charges apply will change from Monday to Saturday, 8am to 6pm to become effective from 7am to 7pm (7 days a week). This will also include charges being introduced on Abington Street for the same time periods and days, for parking bays currently offered as free short stay parking. Further amendments include changing all 1 hour bays in Bridge Street, Mercers Row and George Row to 2 hour bays and increasing the amount of parking spaces available across the whole of the town centre (including disabled bays) through reduction of yellow line restrictions.

2.3 The income from parking and traffic enforcement is used first and foremost to support the provision of the Parking Service with any surplus being ring fenced for transport related projects. Therefore any increases in income received will help mitigate increase reinvestments into the transport, infrastructure, for essential highway work which supports the community at large.

2.4 The changes are also required to align with Northampton Borough Council’s off-street parking operations, and to simplify the on-street parking provision within the central area. The proposals also aim to improve the availability of parking, reduce congestion and to rationalise the times so that they are more convenient for the public.
3. **Highway Proposals**

3.1 The proposals that have been prepared and formally publicised will make changes to how paid parking is provided within Northampton Town Centre, and includes the following amendments:

- Variation to the hours of operation for all time limited (Mon – Sat, 8am to 6pm) pay and display bays, limited waiting bays, loading bays, and permit holder bays within the Town Centre Pay and Display Zone, including single yellow lines. Currently restrictions apply from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Saturday; under the proposals this would change, with restrictions in operation from 7am to 7pm, 7 days a week.

- Under the proposals, all remaining 1 hour pay & display bays in the Town Centre would change to allow parking for up to 2 hours. The roads where bays are planned to be amended include; Bridge Street, George Row and Mercer’s Row.

- Additional parking bays to be accommodated within streets around the central area. The increase in parking spaces will benefit shoppers and local businesses, while also reducing the amount of traffic circulating looking for spaces. The additional spaces will mean a reduction in yellow line restrictions and will be located in streets where existing pay and display bays are already in place.

- Proposals to introduce 4 hour bays in St. John’s Street and Derngate; this will offer visitors to the town centre more flexibility when looking to park for longer periods.

- New designated loading areas on St. Giles Street. This is to ensure businesses have suitable areas in which to receive goods around newly created pay and display bays.

- New disabled bays on St. Giles Street close to local facilities to serve the needs of blue badge holders visiting the area.

- The introduction of pay and display charges on parking bays located in Abington Street.

4. **Consultation**

4.1 **Public notice period**

4.1.1 As required under 'The Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996', the Traffic Regulation Orders for the proposed changes were advertised on the 27th September 2018 in the Northampton Chronicle and Echo allowing 21 days for the public to formally submit responses to the changes.
4.1.2 In addition to the regulatory requirement of public notices being placed in the local press, the following additional steps were taken to inform the public of the proposals:

- Public notices were erected within all the roads affected by the proposals.
- A notification letter was hand delivered to over 2000 properties within the Town Centre Pay and Display Zone.
- Information of the proposals was made available on the County Council’s website.
- A social media campaign was undertaken during of the public notice period.
- Newspaper articles about the proposals appeared in the local press including statements from the portfolio holder about the proposals.

4.1.3 In response to the public notices being advertised, a total of 61 formal representations were made both for and against the changes from the public, businesses, councillors, and other local organisations.

4.1.4 A more detailed presentation of the feedback is presented in the following sections and in addition, a full record of the comments submitted can be found in Appendix 1 & 2.

5. **Summary of objections and comments received**

5.1 The purpose of this section is to give a general summary of the objections and comments received to the proposals. For completeness, and to gain a fuller understanding of the views raised through the public notice period, it is recommended that all the comments recorded in Appendix 1 & 2 are read in conjunction with this report. In addition, copies of the objector’s letters will be made available on request to decision maker.

5.2 **Summary of responses received in response to the proposed variation of the hours and days of operation to 7am to 7pm, 7 days a week.**

**Town Centre Economy and impacts on Businesses and Visitors**

5.2.1 In response to the proposals to extend the charging hours, the main objection raised was the negative impact this would have on the Town Centre Economy and the viability of local businesses to trade effectively.

5.2.2 The objectors concerns focused on the impacts on evening and weekend trade which is stimulated by visitors coming into town after work, or to visit local attractions such as Derrgate Theatre and local picture houses. Sunday is also reported to be a quiet day and the proposals to introduce charges will deter visitors who are more likely to use out of town shopping centres that have free parking which is a more attractive offer to shoppers.

5.2.3 The general feeling from the objector’s comments is that businesses in Town Centres are struggling to stay afloat which is evidenced by the closure of major department stores in recent years. A number of objectors made the point that local Council’s should be doing more to encourage visitors to come into Northampton Town Centre, however by increasing the charging hours, this is more likely to drive customers away. The belief of some objectors is that the proposals are simply a money making exercise for the County Council, due to their current financial position. Although not something under the authority’s
control, the point was made that if further businesses close as a result of a loss in trade, it will result in a loss of income from business rates, negating any financial benefit from proceeding with the changes.

Impact on local residents living within Northampton Town Centre

5.2.4 The second biggest issue raised in objection to increasing the charging hours and days was the adverse impact on residents living within the Town Centre.

5.2.5 The objectors explained that there is a vibrant residential community in Northampton Town Centre and their needs have not been considered within the proposals. Many rely on on-street parking outside their normal working hours and the proposals to start the charging hours at 7am would cause disruption with many having to get up earlier for work or to move their vehicles.

5.2.6 In addition with the extension of the evening charging hours, residents would incur additional parking costs to park on-street. For this reason requests were made by some objectors that permits or some form of exemption should be included for residents to allow them some flexibility to park on-street during these times. The affected roads included Albion Place, Hazelwood Road, Bridge Street and Scholars Court.

5.2.7 A number of residents in Scholars Court have raised a specific objection to the potential impact to parking within the road under the changes. Presently there is a single yellow line restriction on the road which as part of the pay and display zone, applies Monday to Saturday, 8am to 6pm. Under the proposals this would change to apply 7am to 7pm, 7 days a week. All residents have potential access to off-street parking as part of their properties, however some residents have objected to this as currently they can park on the road from 6pm onwards and on Sundays. The points made included:

- Although residents have access to off-street parking, many have more than one vehicle so rely on the on-street parking.
- The proposal will make it difficult for residents who have visitors, especially on Sundays.
- The proposals will impact greatly on families and is against residents human rights to a family life and is against the duties of a local council.
- The proposals will negatively impact the poorest residents who rely on a vehicle for work.
- The proposals were not sufficiently communicated so many residents will be unaware of the changes.

Evidence to support the change to 7am – 7pm charging

5.2.8 A re-occurring point made by several objectors to the proposals, questioned the need to extend the charging hours and the inclusion of Sunday. Requests were made for evidence to support the proposals, as from the objectors observations there was low demand for parking early in the morning (7am-8am) and the only losers under this aspect of the proposals would be residents, or motorists who had parked overnight. Objectors also challenged that the proposals would reduce congestion or meet any of the aims set out in the statement of reasons.

5.2.9 The objectors also questioned that there was sufficient demand for on-street parking on a Sunday to justify extending the parking controls. Some objector's question that the small amount of income generated from the additional
charging hours would not cover the extra costs of enforcement and called for the figures to be realised.

Other general comments

5.2.10 In response to the proposals to extend the charging hours other general comments were made which included:

- The proposals to introduce charges on Sundays will negatively impact parishioners of local churches attending services and events.
- The proposals will cause displacement problems with motorists choosing to park elsewhere in order to avoid the additional charges.
- Government guidance states that parking should not be used in order to simply generate revenue.

5.3 Summary of responses received in response to proposals to amend all existing 1 hour bays to 2 hour bays

5.3.1 In response to the proposals to change the existing 1 hour pay and display bays to 2 hours, the feedback was generally positive with 4 people giving their support for the proposals.

5.3.2 However, one objection was received stating that some shorter stay parking should be retained to cater for short visits to banks, post offices etc.

5.4 Summary of responses received in response to proposals to introduce additional parking bays

5.4.1 The feedback to increase the amount of on-street parking spaces was generally positive with businesses in particular supporting the need for more spaces in key areas such as St. Giles Street, and Derngate.

5.5 Summary of responses received in response to proposals to introduce 4 hour bays in St. John’s Street and Derngate

5.5.1 The proposed 4 hour bays were generally well supported. However a number of objectors claimed that 4 hour on-street bays are not needed as visitors should make use of the off-street car parking for long-stay visits.

5.5.2 Some objectors did raise concerns about some of the changes, specifically the new bays planned for Derngate and St. John’s Street, which they felt would cause road safety issues with traffic exiting nearby junctions.

5.5.3 Further feedback made points that the new bays would negatively impact on the safety of cyclists overtaking parked cars, being forced into the middle of the road and oncoming traffic. Also the parking bays would cause congestion at peak times, especially for buses.
5.6 **Summary of responses received in response to proposals to introduce loading areas on St. Giles Street.**

5.6.1 The proposed new loading areas proposed on St. Giles Street were well supported in the comments received through the consultation. However a couple of businesses took issue with the positioning of some of the bays stating that they would be better positioned at other locations.

5.7 **Summary of responses received in response to proposals to introduce new disabled bays on St. Giles Street.**

5.7.1 In response to the public consultation, mixed feedback was received for the proposal to introduce new disabled bays on St. Giles Street, with an even split of the comments both for and against the proposals.

5.7.2 Of the comments received in support of the proposals there were suggestions that further disabled bays should be included in the proposals, and more vigilant enforcement is required of the existing disabled parking facilities in the Town Centre.

5.7.3 In contrast, other comments received stated that there is no need for dedicated parking for disabled users as blue badge holders can park in standard bays and also on yellow line restrictions. Unless there is an evidenced shortage, the objector believes that the proposed disabled bays should be much needed standard parking bays.

5.8 **Summary of responses received in response to proposals to introduce pay and display charges on parking bays located in Abington Street.**

5.8.1 In total, 8 comments were received that specifically referenced the proposals to introduce pay and display bays on Abington Street. Of these comments 6 were in objection and 2 were in support.

5.8.2 The grounds for objecting to the proposals varied but some of the comments received included;

- The proposals will prevent people from easily dropping off donations to charity shops.
- The introduction of parking bays on Abington Street has been a success, partly due to the free parking. If this is taken away it will deter visitors who will likely go elsewhere.
- Introducing charges on Abington Street would be a retrograde step.
- These proposals will negatively impact local businesses and staff who sometimes have need to park in the bays for work.

5.8.3 The comments received that supported the proposals for Abington Street recognised that the introduction of charges would standardise what is offered elsewhere in the Town Centre.
5.9 **General comments received**

5.9.1 A number of general comments relating to the proposals which include:

- The County Council should be encouraging multiple modes of transport and therefore I do not support the reduction of motorcycle parking bays on Sheep Street which is shown on the proposal plans.

- The proposals have not been very well communicated so many residents and businesses are unaware of the changes that will greatly affect them.

- More consultation should be undertaken with residents and businesses before any decisions are made. On this note, a number of requests have been received for a public meeting to allow for further feedback.

- The County Council should be investing in new technology in their pay and display machines to allow for alternative means of payment, e.g. contactless, pay by phone etc. This would make it easier for shoppers and motorists visiting the area to park.

6. **Officer comments**

6.1 **Proposed variation to the Pay and Display hours of operation from Monday to Saturday 8am - 6pm to apply from 7am to 7pm, 7 days a week**

6.1.1 The decision to proceed with consulting on proposals for a change to the operational hours of the Northampton Pay and Display Zone was made by the County Council’s Cabinet and therefore the role of officers is to report the findings of the consultation. It is recommended the content of this report is reviewed with the Cabinet Member for Transport, Highways, Environment and Public Protection before a decision is taken, however the justification for the changes are set out in section 2, and within the Statement of Reasons.

6.1.2 It should be noted that both the Town Centre Manager and Deputy Leader of Northampton Borough Council has responded on behalf of their authority to state that;

‘Our Cabinet would strongly endorse Derrick’s comments (Town Centre Manager) regarding changing the existing parking charges hours from 08.00 – 18.00 to 07.00 - 19.00. We feel that this would have an adverse effect on the evening economy of the Town Centre and that the earlier start would be a problem for town centre residents. Like Derrick we would ask that this aspect of your proposals is not taken any further forward.’

6.2 **Introduction of Pay and Display Parking Charges on Abington Street.**

6.2.1 The decision to proceed with consulting on proposals to introduce pay and display parking charges on Abington Street was made by the County Council’s Cabinet and therefore the role of officers is to report the findings of the consultation. It is recommended the content of this report is reviewed with the Cabinet Member for Transport, Highways, Environment and Public Protection
before a decision is taken, however the justification for the changes are set out in section 2, and within the Statement of Reasons.

6.2.2 It should be noted that the original scheme to re-introduce parking bays on Abington Street was funded by Northampton Borough Council who have confirmed that the current free parking was intended to be an initial offer to encourage their use. The longer term plan has been to re-introduce paid bays, consistent with other locations within the Pay and Display Zone. The Town Centre Manager on behalf of Northampton Borough Council has confirmed their support for this aspect of the proposal.

6.3 Additional Parking Bays (including 4 hour bays – Derngate & St John’s Street)

6.3.1 On further assessment and having reviewed the feedback from the consultation a number of changes are suggested to the proposals to ensure road safety and access is maintained. The recommended changes are shown on drawings S802/18/03v2 and S802/18/04v2 (Appendix 3, 4 & 5) and include;

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<th>Suggested amendment</th>
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<td>2 hour bay - 2 spaces</td>
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<td>To ensure free passage of buses</td>
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<td>Derngate (outside No.34)</td>
<td>2 hour bay - 3 spaces</td>
<td>Reduction to 2 spaces</td>
<td>To ensure visibility is maintained from Albion Place</td>
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<tr>
<td>Derngate (outside No.48)</td>
<td>2 hour bay - 2 spaces</td>
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<td>To ensure free passage of buses</td>
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<td>Spencer Parade (outside No.1)</td>
<td>2 hour bay - 2 spaces</td>
<td>Reduction to 1 space</td>
<td>To ensure visibility is maintained at pedestrian crossing point</td>
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Table 1

6.4 St. Giles Street – Loading Bays and Disabled Bays

6.4.1 In response to comments received about the position of the proposed loading and disabled bays on St. Giles Street a further assessment has been undertaken to try and accommodate the needs of local businesses.

6.4.2 Some of the objectors feel that the disabled parking bays are not required as blue badge holders can also park in standard bays. However, it should be noted that a dedicated bay for disabled users is designed to be a longer length to accommodate the use of things like tail lifts and access for mobility aids which may not be easily used within a standard size space.

6.4.3 The suggested amendments to the proposals are shown on drawings S802/18/03v2, S802/18/04v2, S802/18/05v2 (Appendix 3, 4 & 5) and include;

- Relocating the proposed disabled bay outside No.45 St Giles Street to the opposite side of the road outside No.28 (currently a 2 hour bay).
- Relocating the proposed loading bay outside No.57/59 to outside No.45 with an extension from 11m to 16.5m to accommodate larger vehicles.
- Extension of the proposed 2 hour bay outside 47/49 to the end of bay outside No.57/59 with an additional 1 parking space than proposed.
7. **Response from County Councillor for the Castle Ward – Councillor Winston Strachan**

7.1 The Ward Councillor for Northampton Town Centre has been consulted on the proposed changes outlined in this report and has responded to confirm that he has no problems with the proposals being taken forward.

8. **Statement by the Cabinet Member for Transport, Highways, Environment and Public Protection**

8.1 On consideration of the feedback received, cabinet member Councillor Ian Morris has confirmed that:

> 'As the cabinet member for Transport, Highways, Environment and Public Protection I fully support the proposed changes for Northampton Town Centre. A review of the Town Centre parking restrictions have been long overdue, and the proposed amendments reflect changes in the demand for parking, which is now 7 days a week. I believe that the plans to increase the amount of parking spaces and to extend the charging hours will make the restrictions clearer and simpler, whilst encouraging the turnover of parking spaces which will benefit local businesses.'

9. **Delegated Decision Statement**

9.1 **Statement in response to comments received through the public notice period by David Grindley, Asset and Traffic Manager, Northamptonshire County Council**

9.2 In my position as Asset and Traffic Manager for Northamptonshire County Council, it is my responsibility to determine the outcome to Traffic Regulation Orders and Notices where representations and objections have been received in response to advertised public notices.

9.3 Having reviewed the representations and observations summarised within this report and in discussion with the Cabinet member for Transport, Highways, Environment and Public Protection, I have reached the following conclusions;

- Like other towns where Sunday parking charges apply, Northampton Town Centre has a 7 day economy, so the County Council needs to manage parking consistently across the week, applying the same principles.

- The proposals to extend the chargeable hours for on-street pay and display parking, are better aligned with recent changes made by Northampton Borough Council to bring in extended weekend and evening charges for all off-street car parks in the Town Centre.
On-street parking spaces in town centres are a valuable asset which need to be managed effectively. The income from parking and traffic enforcement is used first and foremost to support the provision of the Parking Service with any surplus being ring fenced for transport related projects. Therefore any increases in income received will help mitigate increase reinvestments into the transport, infrastructure, for essential highway work which supports the community at large.

Residents living in Northampton Town Centre have a wealth of facilities and transport options on their door step which should put less reliance on vehicle ownership. However, residents who do have a need to park a vehicle have the option to apply for an off-street residents permit from Northampton Borough Council.

DELEGATED DECISION - PART 1

DELEGATED DECISION TAKEN FOR PROPOSALS TO:

EXTEND THE OPERATIONAL CHARGABLE HOURS OF NORTHAMPTON PAY AND DISPLAY ZONE FROM 8AM TO 6PM, MONDAY – SATURDAY TO APPLY FROM 7AM TO 7PM, 7 DAYS A WEEK:

INTRODUCE PAY AND DISPLAY CHARGES ON ALL PARKING BAYS LOCATED ON ABINGTON STREET, NORTHAMPTON

After fully considering the objections/ comments received and information prepared in this document for the proposals outlined above, I have taken the decision as selected below;

To overrule objections received in response to the public notice period allowing the proposals to proceed as advertised.

To make modifications to the advertised proposals.

To support the concerns raised in the objectors comments and abandon the proposals advertised for this location.

Signed: 
Mr David Grindley
Traffic and Asset Manager, Transportation and Infrastructure

Dated: 8/11/18
DELEGATED DECISION - PART 2
DELEGATED DECISION TAKEN FOR PROPOSALS TO:

EXTEND THE WAITING TIME FOR PAY AND DISPLAY PARKING BAYS FROM 1 HOUR TO 2 HOURS IN BRIDGE STREET, MERCERS ROW AND GEORGE ROW, NORTHAMPTON;

INCREASE THE PROVISION OF PAY AND DISPLAY BAYS BY REDUCING YELLOW LINE RESTRICTIONS WITHIN THE TOWN CENTRE PAY AND DISPLAY ZONE.

INTRODUCE NEW 4 HOUR PAY AND DISPLAY BAYS IN DERNGATE AND ST. JOHNS STREET, NORTHAMPTON BY REMOVING YELLOW LINE RESTRICTIONS.

INTRODUCE NEW LOADING BAYS IN ST. GILES STREET BY REMOVING YELLOW LINE RESTRICTIONS.

INTRODUCE NEW DISABLED BAYS IN ST. GILES STREET BY REMOVING YELLOW LINE RESTRICTIONS.

After fully considering the objections/ comments received and information prepared in this document for the proposals outlined above, I have taken the decision as selected below;

To overrule objections received in response to the public notice period allowing the proposals to proceed as advertised.

To make modifications to the advertised proposals as recommended in Section 6 and outlined on drawings S802/18/03v2 and S802/18/04v2 S802/18/05v2 (Appendix 3, 4 & 5)

To support the concerns raised in the objectors comments and abandon the proposals advertised for this location.

Signed: 
Mr David Grindley
Traffic and Asset Manager, Transportation and Infrastructure

Dated: 11/8/18