

## **Residents' Parking**

### **Purpose**

To consider the issue of residents' parking in the parts of Charlbury closest to the station.

### **Background**

Parking in the centre of Charlbury has been problematic for many years due to a combination of narrow streets, the presence of a large number of houses with no off-street parking (as with other ancient West Oxfordshire market towns), and other pressures caused by commercial premises.

Parking is controlled by the County Council as the highways authority, except for car parks owned by others such as the Spendlove (principally West Oxfordshire District Council). Until 2023, parking enforcement on roads was delegated to West Oxfordshire District Council.

In the early 2000s, parking charges were introduced at Charlbury station and ever since, there has been displacement of parking caused by rail users trying to avoid paying the charge. Subsequently, a partial parking prohibition (for one hour a day) was introduced. This proved contentious and when three residents were issued with parking tickets, they refused to pay, were taken to court and given an absolute discharge by the magistrates who felt the system was legally unenforceable.

There has been interest in a residents' parking scheme from residents of Dyers Hill, Church Lane and Thames Street in particular. Anecdotal evidence suggests that 'free ride' commuter parking extends as far as Nine Acres Lane, Grammar School Hill and Enstone Road, some 10 minutes' walk from the station.

There is no automatic right to a parking space on the public highway outside a property, and in Thames Street and elsewhere, residents cannot park near their homes. In Thames Street, Church Lane and Dyers Hill, the number of spaces available is less than the total number of households and is likely to be fewer than the total number of vehicles owned by residents. Similar situations apply in other parts of the historic centre of the town much further from the station, such as Hixet Wood and Fishers Lane.

There has been little formal discussion to date on the merits and challenges of a residents' parking zone being introduced in Charlbury. This paper is intended to set out some of these, in order to facilitate debate. It is for the County Council to consult on and implement any proposals that may result. Residents' views are unclear, but the Town Council has received correspondence in favour of a residents' parking scheme. Questions to be considered include:

- What should the geographical area of any zone be?
- What would be the knock-on effects on areas outside any residents' parking zone?
- Would residents be prepared to accept the restrictions and costs of a zone?

### **County Council parking policies**

Like most highway authorities, [Oxfordshire limits the number of parking permits](#) it makes available per household and has levied an annual charge for each permit. A small number of permits are made available for visitors. The scheme recently introduced in Woodstock charges annually for each permit issued (for each vehicle with a limit of one per person, with a maximum of 2 per property). The charge is currently £70 per year. Permits can be granted on application for tradespeople and carers.

## **Issues and potential constraints**

### **Geography**

The first challenge in setting up a residents' parking zone is where the boundary should be drawn. As is shown by current restrictions on commuter parking, any parking restriction will result in those wishing to avoid parking charges finding alternative parking locations. In Charlbury, rail commuters currently park up to 10 minutes' walk away to avoid a parking charge.

Potential unintended consequences should be considered and solutions that risk 'shifting the problem' or causing new impacts should be avoided. For instance, if a residents' parking zone were to cover Church Lane, Dyers Hill, Thames Street and Market Street, the effect on adjacent roads would need to be taken into account.

### **Non-residential properties**

Household permits are normally assigned to a single car registration associated with a property. Short-term lets and similar properties may therefore not be included in any such scheme, although this would be a matter for the County Council.

### **Supporting shops and other businesses**

After repeated requests, in 2023 spaces were created in Market Street for shoppers to park for 1 hour, to support local businesses. This provision would need to be retained and (arguably) extended. Other businesses (food/drink outlets, childcare provision, etc) will wish to see areas for vehicles to access them with minimum inconvenience.

### **Private lanes and unadopted roads**

In the centre of Charlbury there are a number of private and unadopted roads, some of which suffer from issues of nuisance parking. These are outside the jurisdiction of the County Council and parking arrangements are the responsibility of the owners of the road, if any. We understand that the County Council would not stop residents with off-street parking from applying for a permit, but eligibility for permits would be something considered as part of the design for any scheme.

### **Financial implications**

Charlbury Town Council has no jurisdiction or responsibility for residents' parking. Any scheme would require a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) with a statutory consultation. The Council has no financial provision for this.

### **Recommendation**

The Traffic Committee is invited to make a recommendation regarding residents' parking.