

Notes of LBE Parking Meeting held at 1400 on Wed. 10th January at Perceval House

Present:

Gina Cole, (Chairperson) LBE, Interim Assistant Director (Parking Services)
Tony Singh, Acting Asst Director LBE (Highways)
Mark McIntosh, LBE Commercial Asset Manager (Parking Services)
Eric Leach, Chair, West Ealing Centre Neighbourhood Forum (WECNF)
Dave Randles, Secretary, West Ealing Centre Neighbourhood Forum (WECNF)
John Cowing, Cttee Member, West Ealing Centre Neighbourhood Forum (WECNF)
Cllr Paul Conlan, Walpole Ward

Introductions

The chairperson explained that LBE is required to embrace policies set out in the London Plan particularly with regard to discouraging use of the car in order to reduce pollution levels.

EL explained the background behind WECNF and the emerging Neighbourhood Plan (NP) for central West Ealing which is expected to be put before cabinet for approval at their next full meeting on 16th January 2018. If approved, the NP will then go to public referendum (Business & Residential). EL explained that WECNF's original draft plan had included a policy designed to protect public parking within the town centre but that this policy had subsequently been deleted from the final draft by LBE following extensive discussions with Steve Barton (LBE Strategic Planning Manager, Regeneration and Planning). The meeting had been arranged by Steve Barton so that LBE could form a better understanding about some of the community's concerns about parking

WECNF then addressed their list of concerns that had been sent to LBE in advance of the meeting:

Q1. Can you please give/send WECNF a copy of the London Borough of Ealing's (LBE's) Car Parking policies and current Traffic & Management Orders (TMOs) affecting LBE's parking policies and charging structures within the borough?

LBE stated that this would be possible but that they did not have the documents to hand. WECNF asked if the February 1995 TMO dealing with off-street parking had now been re-written. LBE said they thought that the various documents had now been consolidated into a new TMO and that copies of this could be provided

Q2. What is LBE's policy re selling/long term rental of public car parking spaces to companies? As an example, we quote the 'sale' of 20 public car parking places in the Dean Gardens Car Park to Chart Forte court (WE) Ltd – re the Holiday Inn Express. The irony of this is significant as the LBE Planning Committee granted permission for this hotel to be built as a 'no car' hotel.

LBE stated that all businesses are welcome to apply for dedicated long-term parking provision. WECNF stated that the guidelines on acceptance are not clear and that, certainly in the case of the new hotel, there appears to have been a disconnect between Parking Services and Planning departments. LBE disagreed, stating that Parking

Services worked closely with Planning and always took into account agreed planning conditions. LBE was unable to explain why they had agreed to license 20 spaces to the hotel when planning approval had been specifically granted as a 'no car' development. They said that they were unaware of this condition preferring to believe that approval had been granted on grounds of 'low' car usage. LBE stated that they only agreed to license the spaces after an actual usage survey had been conducted. WECNF stated that LBE's survey failed to take into account the potential decline in high street trade as a result of their decision and failed to take into account the views of local traders. WECNF expressed the view that offering discounted parking to the hotel directly contradicted LBE's and London Plan policy on discouraging use of the car.

Q3. Has LBE already extended the lease with Chart Forte court (WE) Ltd in respect of the dedicated car parking spaces within Dean Gardens Car Park for a further year? If so, and in the light of the significant new West Ealing CPZ arrangements in the surrounding areas, please supply an amended copy of the contract showing the agreed fee payable and the revised termination date.

LBE stated that they did not know whether the hotel parking agreement had been extended for a further year although they suspected that that might well be the case. They undertook to report back on the matter. LBE agreed that renewal of the licence would be subject to a further parking survey in light of the significant changes in local parking arrangements brought about by approval of the new West Ealing CPZ; LBE was unable to say whether such a survey had been conducted prior to extension of the agreement but promised to report back.

Q4. Please provide a detailed summary analysis of current shopper-parking arrangements and charges within the immediate location of the high street at West Ealing Broadway.

LBE stated that they did not have a detailed analysis to hand but would report back.

Q5. How is LBE compensating for the loss of 8 or more disabled car parking bays at the rear of the BHS site of around two years?

LBE were unable to answer to this question but stated the 7 spaces would be restored once building work was complete. They agreed that such restoration may not be possible for at least 2 years. LBE stated that they did not believe this to be a priority given that disabled drivers are free to park almost anywhere in the borough on display of a valid permit.

Q6. How many car parking spaces will be created to compensate for the loss of the remaining Singapore Road surface car park? When will this close?

LBE stated that they did not know exactly when the remaining half of the Singapore Road car park would close. They believed that the car park currently contains around 24 spaces and stated that alternative arrangements would be put in place once the remainder of the car park closed. When pushed over the exact location of any additional parking, LBE said that they did not have that detailed information to hand but understood that an additional 4 spaces would be created along Singapore Road itself.

Q7. When will the public car park next to the Magistrates' Court close?

LBE stated that they were unaware of any plans to close this car park.

Q8. Given the loss of up to 24 car parking spaces reserved for the staff of St John's Primary School, where will staff park and where will parents, mini-buses for multi-handicapped children and school activity coaches park? Is there a new drop-off/pick-up zone?

LBE were unable to answer this question but suggested that WECNF speak to the school directly. LBE seemed unaware that the original car park is also used by Waitrose staff at weekends and by local shoppers during school holidays. They were unable to offer guidance on available parking spaces for school mini-buses or coaches for school trips. There were thought to be at least 3 mini-buses in use, twice daily, to bring and collect multi-handicapped children to and from school.

Q9. What are the new car parking arrangement in Maitland Yard?

LBE stated that proposals were in hand to include Maitland Yard as part of a designated off-street parking area and that work had already commenced in painting white lines to mark out bays. The signage was not yet erected. They stated that the available spaces would be made available for general parking but did not know whether local traders would be given priority. WECNF expressed concern that LBE were unable to offer any guidance on this matter given that the statutory consultation period has now ended and that the necessary signage is already under construction.

WECNF also highlighted concerns over fire access to the rear of the shops expressing the view that the corridors that have recently been marked out are too narrow. WECNF provided an image taken last year showing the restricted space that impeded London Fire Brigade appliances during a recent fire.

Q10. Why is LBE recommending a reduction in the usable carriageway width within the troublesome Felix Road rat run to allow for additional CPZ car parking spaces? Why will new private residential buyers be given CPZ parking permits?

WECNF expressed confusion over the consistency of rules governing the eligibility to CPZ areas for new residential property. WECNF asked why residents of the 20+ proposed new houses to be built on the old St. John's School site in Felix Road are eligible whilst others living in apartment blocks, such as Green Man Estate, are not given the same opportunity. It appears that different rules apply for some properties and that LBE is prepared to ignore London Plan policy and guidance when new properties are designated as high value and for private sale. WECNF expressed the view that there appears to be one rule for the rich and another for the poor. LBE were unable to clarify the level of discretion used in their interpretation of the London Plan.

WECNF observed that existing planning approval for the new houses includes new CPZ parking provision along the southern side of the existing carriageway resulting in an unacceptable reduction in useable carriageway width likely to lead to a return of former traffic congestion and road rage incidents. LBE declined to comment claiming that the issue of carriageway width is not a parking matter; WECNF claimed that, once again, this highlighted a lamentable lack of communication between different LBE departments.

Q11. Where will the 3,000 worshippers and staff at the new West Ealing Islamic Centre park their vehicles? What arrangements has LBE made to cater for the new regional mosque which is designed to attract up to 3,000 worshippers from across west London on any one day?

LBE stated that they were aware of past congestion and parking issues relating to the old West London Islamic Centre in Singapore Road. They acknowledged that the plans for such a sizeable new mosque would serve to attract significantly more visitors from outside the town and said that they would consider holding a meeting to investigate further. WECNF welcomed the offer but pointed out that planning permission has already been granted as a no-car development and that construction of the new mosque has already commenced. WECNF asked why the matter was not addressed when the original planning application was submitted, concluding that this was yet another example of the departmental disconnect that appears to exist within the borough. LBE felt unable to respond.

Q12. The West Ealing CPZ involved covertly changing the nature of the operation of 'Stop and Shop' car parking bays. Under the old system no-one could legally park in them for more than 30 minutes. Now it is not the case. Why weren't the public informed of this during consultation and implementation?

WECNF asked how this change could have happened seemingly without any proper consultation and stated their view that LBE have failed to grasp the full significance of the change. LBE claimed that the changes had been well documented as part of the original West Ealing CPZ consultation and WECNF responded, stating that a large majority of local traders were certainly unaware of the proposals. WECNF pointed out that only 4 out of 129 traders along the southern side of the Broadway had responded to the CPZ consultation and asked why such a poor return didn't ring alarm bells within the council. LBE stated that response to the West Ealing CPZ consultation as a whole had also been very poor. They acknowledged that they did not consult any traders on the north side of the high street and that they had not thought to contact the elected West Ealing BID to canvas the views of traders

Q13. Why is the car parking pricing regime not consistent throughout West Ealing? For example why is the first hour of parking in Dean Gardens higher than for subsequent hours? Why is car registration number required for some public car parking and not for others?

LBE agreed that parking charges lacked consistency across the borough and undertook to rationalize the situation. No timetable was offered.

Q14. WECNF attempted to specify in its spatial plan for 2017 – 2032 that the number of public car parking spaces would not be reduced? LBE Planning Policy said no – as this contravened car parking policy. Please explain. I suppose then that if Sainsburys built a new supermarket the new car park could be no bigger than the current one.

LBE were unable to explain their reasons for excluding WECNF's parking retention clause within the emerging Neighbourhood Plan but stressed their obligation to abide by the terms of the London Plan in discouraging the use of cars and in helping to reduce pollution levels. WECNF asked about the impact of a major regeneration within the town centre including the Sainsbury's site as well as a significant increase in residential units but LBE were unable to comment. WECNF pointed out the commercial need for major supermarkets to have adequate shopper parking. WECNF thought it likely that Sainsbury's would not wish to carry on trading within the town centre area if customers were barred from parking near to the store and stressed the commercial need for the store to remain competitive with others such as Waitrose, who currently enjoy anything up to 200 parking spaces.

Q15. Is the future plan to make all public car parking by mobile telephone only? Does LBE agree that the exclusive use of the 'Ringgo' telephone parking service constitutes Indirect Age Discrimination?

LBE said that they understood the position with regard to elderly people and would continue to make provision for this group although they did not have the details of any proposal to hand. When asked about reliability of the Ringgo system, LBE stated that the company immediately informed the council of any malfunction to prevent members of the public from being issued with unnecessary penalty notices. LBE stated that their choice of Ringgo was dictated by the West London Alliance.

EL concluded by expressing WECNF's disappointment over the council's failure to consult with the Forum as an elected and designated body approved by LBE. He reminded LBE of the benefits of working more closely with members of the community, many of whom have intimate and detailed knowledge of their area and the problems that exist.

Given the large number of outstanding issues that were identified, both LBE and WECNF agreed the need for a further meeting. No date was agreed.

The meeting concluded at 1500 hrs.