

DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

HIGHWAYS AND TECHNICAL OPERATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE

30th October 1996

Report of the Head of Highways and Transportation

Parking Policy

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek approval for a parking policy for the County.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The control of parking is a key measure in enhancing the efficiency and safety of the highway system. It is of value also in promoting the use of more environmentally sustainable modes of transport through discouraging the use of a car particularly in congested urban areas.
- 2.2 The Council is responsible for the regulation of all on-street parking while the control of public off-street parking is split between the Council and private other public and private operators. There is no control over private off-street parking except via planning permissions for the amount included in new developments.

2.3 Residential Parking

The presence of parked vehicles on-street can reduce the capacity and efficiency of highways, cause road safety hazards, restrict access for emergency vehicles and detract from visual amenity particularly in the countryside and historic areas in towns. It has to be recognised, however, that not all demand for parking can reasonably be met from off-street parking. In areas of Victorian or older terrace housing, for example, and in many housing estates built in the 1930's and 1950's, it is rarely possible for residents to locate parking within the boundaries of their properties or to park in nearby car parks. Unreasonably restricting parking in such circumstances would limit the opportunity for residents to own cars.

Policy 1 - In urban areas the Council will encourage motorists to use off-street parking where it is available. Where off-street parking facilities are not available the Council will restrict parking on-street only where there are over-riding considerations of safety, amenity or the need to retain or improve the capacity of a road.

- 2.4 There are locations, particularly in residential streets, where there are conflicting demands between different users to make use of available kerb space for parking. Problems arise, for example, in or around town centres where shoppers, commuters and tourists park in residential streets. The presumption is that priority will be given to residents. Restricting parking in residential roads to residents and their visitors can also generate benefits in reducing extraneous traffic and thereby reduce the risk of accidents. The issue of residents parking schemes has been considered by the Committee at its meeting on 1st May 1996 (minute no. 96 refers) when approval was granted for the introduction of such schemes initially on an experimental or pilot basis.

Policy 2 - The Council will consider the introduction of residents parking schemes and other suitable measures to restrict parking in residential streets to residents and their visitors.

- 2.5 An aspect of parking that gives rise to concern, is that which takes place outside schools. The use of the private car to transport children to school, particularly in urban areas where few children have entitlement to free school transport, is increasing rapidly due to parents' concerns about the safety of children crossing busy roads and other safety concerns. This is giving rise to increased parking outside schools with consequently higher actual or perceived risks of accidents. It is proposed to review parking outside schools and to use measures that are available, such as school clearway orders, to prevent parking in unsafe locations. Reviews will be supported by publicity to raise the awareness of parents to park sensibly. The issue can also be addressed by providing safe routes to schools for pedestrians and cyclists which could reduce the desire to use the car as the mode of travel.

Policy 3 - Parking outside schools will be reviewed with appropriate measures and publicity used to deter unsafe parking.

- 2.6 Footway parking causes particular problems for people with restricted vision who are unable to see obstacles in their path and for wheelchair users or people pushing baby buggies or prams. Where the footway width is severely restricted the latter groups of pedestrians may have to walk in the road to negotiate a parked vehicle with obvious implications for road safety. This practice also causes damage to footways leading to hefty repair costs and potential pedestrian trips. Footway parking, therefore should be discouraged or accommodated in such a fashion that pedestrian routes are not obstructed and footways not damaged.

Policy 4 - The Council will review instances of footway parking and will use enforcement, publicity or engineering measures, as appropriate, to ensure that pedestrian routes are not obstructed. And avoid damage to footways.

2.7 Parking in Town Centres

The Council's objections are to sustain the vitality, attractiveness and viability of the County's towns centres. Town centres generate parking demand from shoppers, tourists and workers, and clearly providing adequate parking will ensure that the County's town centres can compete effectively with other retail and business centres outside Denbighshire.

2.8 In terms of safety, visual amenity and allowing ease of movement for pedestrians, parking should ideally be provided in off-street car parks. This is not always possible because of the cost of acquiring sites and then constructing car parks. In addition, in historic towns this could involve destroying the visual and historic character that makes them attractive to visitors. Some on-street parking, therefore may be necessary to meet parking demands. Where it is provided it is suggested that it should be restricted to short stay, usually between 30 minutes and 2 hours maximum duration. This ensures a high turnover of vehicles and provides for parking at close proximity to shops for shoppers and, where necessary, for vehicles delivering to shops.

Policy 5 - The Council will permit short stay on-street car parking in town centres to complement off-street car parking provision, subject to considerations of road safety, visual amenity and ease of pedestrian movement.

2.9 The Council manages a number of car parks in the County's town centres. In reviewing the management of these facilities consideration will be given to designating car parks near the main shopping streets for short stay use in order to encourage shoppers to visit the County's retail centres. Long-stay (all day) parking will be catered for in the more peripherally located car parks.

Policy 6 - The Council will manage the car parks in its ownership to provide short stay parking close to main shopping streets in town centres and long stay car parks located further from town centres for commuters and other longer stay uses.

2.10 As an alternative to locating parking in town centres it is possible to site car parks on the edge of towns and provide Park and Ride bus services to connect the two. As well as catering more easily for growing demand for parking, Park and Ride has the benefit of removing traffic from congested roads in or around town centres. As controls are introduced on parking by non-residents in residential areas Park and Ride offers the opportunity to cater for disabled parking. Currently, one Park and Ride scheme is in operation in Rhyl catering for tourists and shoppers.

Policy 7 - The Council will seek to support and promote and expand Park and Ride schemes in Denbighshire.

2.11 Parking for Disabled People

The Orange Badge scheme enables people with disabilities to obtain an Orange Badge which allows a vehicle driven by a driver with a disability or by an able bodied driver conveying a disabled passenger to park almost anywhere on-street where there is no loading/unloading restriction. The scheme was set up to permit people particularly with a restricted walking ability to park close to locations they wish to visit.

2.12 The Institution of Highways and Transportation (IHT) has published guidelines on providing for people with mobility handicaps. Research showed that the majority of people with impairments (wheelchair users, visually impaired, stick users and ambulatory without walking aid) can move no more than 137 metres without a rest. In considering the provision of parking priority should be given, therefore to ensuring that Orange Badge holders can park within 137 metres of their homes, and town centre and

other destinations. This can be achieved by marking advisory disabled persons parking bays (most suitable in residential streets), designating mandatory Orange Badge parking bays or through the use of limited waiting or no waiting restrictions. The IHT guidelines have also recommended reserving spaces in car parks for Orange Badge holders and it is suggested that the Council adopt these recommendations for use in its own car parks and in discussions with the managers or developers of privately owned car parks.

Policy 8 - Priority will be given to catering for the parking needs of disabled people. In car parks, reserved spaces will be designated for Orange Badge holders as follows:-

- (i) for car parks associated with employment premises and provided for employees and visitors.
up to 200 spaces - 5% of capacity, subject to a minimum of 2 spaces
over 200 spaces - 2% of capacity, plus 6 spaces
- (ii) for car parks associated with shopping areas, leisure or recreational facilities, and places open to the general public:
up to 200 spaces - 6% of capacity subject to a minimum of 3 spaces
over 200 spaces - 4% of capacity plus 4 spaces

2.13 Parking in the Countryside

The car gives access to the countryside by parking at beauty spots can cause damage to vegetation and verges, contribute to erosion and be visually intrusive. It may also create a hazard if on the highway. The Council will work with tourist attractions and bodies responsible for promoting countryside recreation to provide small lay-bys and car parks in the countryside. Promoting the use of public transport and cycling can also help to reduce parking demand in rural areas by encouraging visitors to leave their cars at home.

Policy 9 - The Council will promote the provision of lay-bys and car parks to cater for demands for recreational parking in rural areas.

2.14 Enforcement

Enforcement of parking controls in car parks lies in the hands of the car park managers. Particular difficulties are encountered with enforcement of on-street parking restrictions. Enforcement of waiting restrictions is currently the responsibility of the North Wales Police and its traffic warden service. Resources are limited and complaints are regularly received that restrictions are not being enforced adequately.

Powers are available under the provision of the Road Traffic Act 1991, to enable local authorities to take over responsibility from the Police for the enforcement of non-endorsable parking offences. Adopting these powers however will carry significant additional financial implications and at this stage it is intended only to investigate options for improving enforcement.

Policy 10 - The Council will investigate means of improving enforcement of on-street parking controls.

2.15 Charging for Car Parking

The Council currently charges for parking in off street car parks in the former Rhuddlan Borough Council area (see Appendix) and Llangollen. Charging for parking, whether on or off-street can be used for a number of purposes, as follows:-

- (i) to manage parking, for example, to discourage commuters from using short stay car parks by charging higher rates for all day parking.
- (ii) to make enforcement easier. Enforcement, particularly of short stay parking, is easier where enforcement officers only have to check a ticket displaying the time of arrival or time of latest departure attached to a windscreen, rather than patrolling an area and noting vehicle registrations to calculate the length of time parked.
- (iii) to generate revenue which can be used to fund enhanced enforcement or make improvements to car parks, for example installing better security.
- (iv) to encourage the use of more environmentally sustainable modes of transport, for example by charging high rates for all day car parking in urban areas revenue can be channelled into Park and Ride schemes which in turn relieve town centres of congestion or to improve public transport services.

- 2.16 The underlying concern regarding charging is the impact it has on shopping habits. The smaller town centres are dependent on competing effectively with larger centres both within and outside the County and with out-of-town centre superstores and retail parks where ample free car parking is available. In these circumstances, the case for introducing or extending charging should be reviewed separately for each settlement.

Policy 11 - The Council will develop a system of charging for car parking which takes account the needs and problems of its towns and communities.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To approve the report policies contained within the report, and
- 3.2 To authorise officers to bring forward proposals which will help achieve the policy requirements.

Director of Technical Services