

Agenda Item No: 11
Report To: JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD
Date: TUESDAY 11TH DECEMBER 2007
Report Title: Tenterden & St Michaels Parking Review Meeting
Report Author: Ray Wilkinson, Engineering Services Manager



Summary:

To brief Members on the outcome of the survey of on-street parking within Zones 1A and 1B of the proposed Tenterden & St Michaels Parking Scheme and off-street parking in Tenterden's public town centre car parks as requested by the Board at the meeting of 5th June 2007.

Key Decision: NO

Affected Wards: Tenterden & St Michaels

Recommendations : **Subject to the approval of the Board it is proposed that:**
a) **A meeting or meetings take place between the Ward Members of Tenterden & St Michaels and the officers concerned in order to evaluate which elements, if any, of the advertised restrictions can be introduced whilst maintaining the consistency of the scheme;**
b) **The conclusion of these meetings to be included in final report to the Board.**

Policy Overview: The Tenterden & St Michaels Parking Review is being conducted as part of the Ashford Transport Strategy, July 2001 which set out the breakdown of the Borough's urban areas into parking zones for review.

Financial Implications: N/A

Risk Assessment N/A

Other Material Implications: N/A

Background Papers: The summary results of the survey, previous JTB reports, and responses received during the April 2007 consultation are available to view within the Engineering Services Department.

Contacts: ray.wilkinson@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330299

Report Title: Tenterden & St Michaels Parking Review Survey

Purpose of the Report

1. To brief Members on the outcome of the survey of on-street parking within Zones 1A and 1B of the proposed Tenterden & St Michaels Parking Scheme and off-street parking in Tenterden's public town centre car parks as requested by the Board at the meeting of 5th June 2007. Furthermore to request Members' approval to carry out a meeting or meetings with Tenterden and St Michaels Ward Members in order to evaluate which elements, if any, of the advertised restrictions can be introduced whilst maintaining the consistency of the scheme.

Issue to be Decided

2. Whether part of the scheme can be introduced and the consistency of the scheme still be maintained.

Background

3. The Tenterden & St Michaels parking scheme proposals underwent formal consultation between 5th April 2007 – 4th May 2007. Requests were received during the consultation process from Tenterden Town Council and Tenterden Chamber of Commerce for a further survey of on-street parking within the proposed limited waiting zones (1A & 1B) and the town centre's car parks to be carried out. They felt that the survey carried out in January 2005 was now out of date, and that the time of year at which it was conducted did not reflect the increased visitor volumes experienced in the summer months as a result of the tourist trade. Members therefore recommended a further survey be carried out prior to the full results of the consultation being presented to the Board.

Methodology

4. Both surveys were conducted on Thursday 5th July 2007, the day was chosen to be as representative as possible (i.e. a non-market week day, during both the tourist season and school term time). The weather on the day in question was fine which, coming after a few days of rain, would have slightly raised the number of town centre visitors.
5. The on-street survey was carried out at hourly intervals between 07:00 and 18:00. For the purposes of the survey the zone was divided into survey sections, each comprising one side of a street (longer streets were subdivided). The surveyors then recorded the vehicle registration numbers of all vehicles parked within each section at each hourly sweep. An additional survey sweep was also undertaken at 05:00 on the day in question, in order to identify those vehicles belonging to residents (it was assumed that all vehicles present at this time were residents' vehicles – the only exception being in the vicinity of the royal mail sorting office where the vehicle registrations of employees were provided in order to enable surveyors to discount shift workers' vehicles from the list of residents' vehicles).

6. Initial analysis of the on-street parking survey consisted of categorising all logged vehicles as either 'resident' or 'visitor' and 'short stay' (only logged on a single non consecutive survey), 'medium stay' (logged on two consecutive surveys), or 'long stay' (logged on three or more consecutive surveys). This categorisation allowed the production of a table indicating the number of vehicles present at the time of each survey sweep which were both 'visitor' and 'long stay' – i.e. all those vehicles which would not be eligible for a residents parking permit and would fall outside the 'two hours limited waiting' restriction and would therefore potentially be displaced by the introduction of the proposed scheme.
7. The off-street survey was conducted between 08:00 and 18:00. As with the on-street survey, survey sweeps were conducted at hourly intervals at which time the number of empty parking bays were counted.

Survey Results

8. Comparison of the displacement figures obtained from the on-street parking survey and the spare capacity identified in the off-street survey, show a strong peak in parking demand at around 11:00 where there were 155 empty car park spaces recorded and 165 vehicles likely to be displaced.
9. This figure does not however take into account the following points which are likely to reduce the true number of vehicles displaced into the town centre car parks:
 10. First, the survey does not take account of the present 'one hour limited waiting' restrictions in the High Street, East Cross, and Ashford Road. A number of vehicles were recorded parking in contravention of the limited waiting restriction; during the period of peak parking demand (i.e. 11:00) there were a total of 18 vehicles contravening the restriction of which 4 were classified as 'resident'. With the introduction of residents' permits, it would be assumed that these 'resident' vehicles will relocate to the 2 hour limited waiting bays in surrounding streets where the permits will be valid, thereby freeing up the 1 hour limited waiting bays to short stay town centre visitors whom would otherwise be required to park in one of the town centre car parks. Of the 14 'visitor' vehicles contravening the restriction, 10 were recorded on 3 or more consecutive surveys and were therefore counted among the vehicles displaced into the town centre car parks. In view of the differing restrictions at this location however, those 'freed up' bays will be available to short stay visitors thereby once again reducing the pressure on the car parks from short stay visitors. Finally those 'visitor' vehicles recorded on 2 consecutive surveys were not included in the displacement figures but as their relocation would 'free up' on-street short stay parking spaces, their overall impact may be considered neutral.
 11. The move from parking in uncharged residential streets to charged car parks is likely to act as a sufficient incentive to encourage some town centre workers to reassess their travel arrangements: Alternatives include; car sharing (KCC runs an on-line car share scheme to enable people to contact others in their area making similar journeys), public transport, walking, and cycling. The Department of Transport's figures for 2006 indicate that 20% of all trips under a mile in length, made by car/van. Furthermore, almost 60% of trips between 1 and 2 miles in length are made by car/van. These figures

would indicate (supported by anecdotal evidence from previous consultations within Tenterden & St Michaels) that many of the trips currently made by car into Tenterden town centre could be achieved either by walking or other modes of transport.

Meeting with Tenterden Town Council / Tenterden Chamber of Commerce

12. A meeting was held with representatives of Tenterden Town Council and Tenterden Chamber of Commerce on 15th October 2007 in order to share the results of the survey. Following this meeting a number of letters have been received from both Tenterden Town Council and Tenterden District Residents' Association. Tenterden Chamber of Commerce also conducted an emergency public meeting on 22nd November 2007 in order to discuss the results of the survey.
13. A number of issues were raised both within the letters and at the public meeting. Unfortunately many of these concerns are the result of misinterpretation of the data provided which was then disseminated among the various stakeholder groups. Below are the primary points raised:
14. *The total car park capacity figures are overstated by approximately 100 spaces, as a result the survey results indicate that the car parks can accommodate 100 more vehicles than is truly the case. Taking this error into account the results show that the car parks will be unable to accommodate the extra demand generated by the displaced vehicles for the majority of the working day.*

The total car park capacity figures included in the results were simply used as a guide by our consultants in order to gauge the number of surveyors required to carry out the works in each car park. As mentioned in the methodology, the number of available car parking spaces was calculated by simply counting the empty bays observed during the survey sweep rather than counting the number of parked vehicles and subtracting the figure from the total car park capacity figure. The results of the survey are therefore unaffected by any queries relating to total car park capacity figures.

In order to clarify however, car park capacity figures have since been confirmed as follows:

Recreation Ground Road	Tenterden Leisure Centre	Bridewell Lane	Station Road	Tesco	Total
289	152	127	43	255	866

15. *The parking survey was conducted only 3 days prior to the Tour de France at which time there were already barriers and signage in place, including the barriering off of some of the on-street parking bays. This will have acted to discourage visitors from entering the town, thereby skewing the results, suggesting a lower level of parking demand than is truly the case.*

Although there were barriers stockpiled in the town centre awaiting setting out for the Tour de France on the day of the survey, as confirmed by the survey

supervisor, none of the parking bays were barriered off. This fact is also supported by the survey figures themselves which show a peak level of parking in the town centre's 'one hour limited waiting' bays along the route of the race of 104 vehicles, indicating the bays to be at maximum capacity. This suggests that not only were the bays available for parking, but that visitors were not discouraged by the Tour de France paraphernalia.

16. *The £8.00 all day charge, due to be increased to £9.60, would mean an annual spend per employee of approximately £2,500 a sum far too high for many shop workers to be expected to pay.*

The £8.00 charge referred to is a punitive charge in the council's short stay car parks designed to discourage long stay parkers. The designated long stay car park charge is currently £2.50 per day (due to rise to £3.00 in January 2008). There are also season tickets available for various durations which offer a scaled level of discount. Annual season tickets are currently priced at £450 (due to rise to £510 in January 2008). Bridewell Lane car park is currently the only designated long stay car park in the town centre, should the scheme be introduced however, the shift in the balance between short and long stay parkers can be accommodated by the conversion of some of the short stay car parks to long stay. This would be achieved simply by the removal of the punitive charge and the installation of a long stay all day charge to match that applied to Bridewell Lane.

Conclusion

17. In light of the most recent survey and following a reassessment of all the consultation that has taken place over the Tenterden & St Michaels Parking Review, we should like to suggest that the best way forward would be for the Ward Members from Tenterden and St Michaels to meet with officers to evaluate which elements (if any) of the advertised restrictions can be introduced, while maintaining the consistency of the scheme.
18. Subject to the JTB's agreement to this proposal, a final report will be compiled for the Board which will include the outcomes reached from the Ward Member/Officer meetings.

Contact:	Ray Wilkinson
Email:	ray.wilkinson@ashford.gov.uk