

Yarm Car Parking Information Sheet 1

1. Yarm Rail Halt

A number of objectors (approximately 14) referred specifically to the imposition of charges at Yarm Rail Halt being counterproductive to encouragement of sustainable travel modes and that charges may also lead to displaced parking in surrounding streets and congestion at the ticket machine just before scheduled train departures.

The decision to advertise charges here was unrelated to the other advertised Yarm Town Centre proposals but was advertised simultaneously for efficiency reasons.

The car park running costs (CCTV, Business Rates, Water rates, insurance, winter maintenance, repairs and maintenance, cleansing etc) do amount to a significant annual revenue commitment and since 1996 have been met largely from Stockton Town Centre's car park users and the proposed £1 daily charge is still significantly lower than Stockton Town Centre charges (currently £2.40 per day) to reflect the Council's desire not to cause significant displacement. Rail users will still have a convenient and secure car park for a relatively modest price.

The rail halt car park is now regularly full beyond the number of marked out bays. Stockton Council own the Rail Halt car park and we do have an option to extend it but such capital works would need to be funded from the car park income stream in the current economic climate.

Some rail users have complained that it is being used by Conyers 6th formers and as a car share meeting point and that they are forced to park outside a bay when they arrive for the later trains. This gives them added concern if a Control of Use Order made this practice a penalty charge offence. We have carried out some observations to understand the extent of this alleged pattern of use and whilst these practices do occur it is unlikely to account for more than 20% of those using the car park. Therefore it is more likely that the recent increase in patronage is due to the high charges at Darlington Station.

The car park aisles are currently wider than usual to accommodate a large bus turning circle. Whilst full size Arriva buses no longer call at the Halt, smaller Leven Valley buses do so on Sundays and evenings. However, the car park layout would be reorganised to accommodate more bays as part of the proposals.

Season tickets are always available in our long stay charging car parks. If charges are approved here then the weekday season ticket prices would be £15 per month with equivalent 3 monthly (£42), 6 monthly (£80) and annual (£150) season tickets also available. This reflects the Council's objective of encouraging sustainable travel considering daily charges imposed by the Rail Operator at Thornaby are £2.60 and at Darlington £11.

It should also be noted that passengers would never need to risk missing a train or incurring a penalty charge (if parking charges are approved) as all our charging car parks are covered by the RingGo scheme whereby you can pay for parking by mobile phone whilst you are actually away from your vehicle (on the train) without the need to display a ticket. Similarly parking stays could be extended by mobile phone beyond the initial time purchased.

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2. Impact on residents

The proposals do not include any changes to parking on Yarm High Street.

We received approximately 90 objections that mentioned the difficulty that the proposals would create for residents of central Yarm. More than 40 of these letters came from addresses outside of central Yarm. 15 were requesting additional restrictions in Atlas Wynd and West End Gardens.

Yarm residents seem to have been completely misinformed about the scale of proposals we have put forward. I'd like to make it absolutely clear that we are not "removing 35% or 170 parking spaces reducing the total available to just 303 spaces" as was reported widely in the media.

In fact none of the proposals affect the parking arrangement in the High Street that alone provides parking for 333 cars (206 in the Disc zone and 127 in the long stay area).

I will clarify below the practical impact of the proposals street by street.

(i) Atlas Wynd - nil loss of parking opportunity

The proposed restrictions here apply to the carriageway only so there is nil loss of parking opportunity as the proposed yellow lines simply reinforce general parking practices but is intended to reduce the occasional instances of obstructive parking. The concerns of Minerva Mews and Atlas Wynd residents (which included a petition containing 19 signatures) are noted and we will work with the Management Company and residents to address any worsening of their parking problems. However we cannot introduce the additional restrictions requested as part of the current consultation.

(ii) Bentley Wynd - nil loss of parking opportunity

The proposed restrictions here were intended to include **exemptions for the 3 marked parking bays on Bentley Wynd and existing parking at Snaith's Field** resulting in nil loss of practical parking opportunity. The proposed yellow lines were simply intended to replace the existing Keep Clear markings (badly faded in some places) and reinforce general parking practices on narrow sections of carriageway. They were also intended to reduce the occasional instances of obstructive parking by giving greater clarity to motorists and making enforcement easier. I recognise that the advertised plans were less than clear in this respect so **I propose to remove the advertised yellow lines covering the sections that currently accommodate off carriageway parking.**

(iii) Bridge Street - nil loss of parking opportunity

The proposed restrictions here are intended to be carriageway only so there nil loss of practical parking opportunity. The proposed yellow lines were simply intended to replace the existing Keep Clear markings near the viaduct and at the junction with West Street and reinforce general parking practices but were also intended to reduce the occasional instances of obstructive parking by giving greater clarity to motorists and making enforcement easier.

(iv) High Church Wynd – maximum loss of 4 spaces

This street is very narrow but along some sections accommodates parking on one side, generally the south side. We continually receive complaints concerning obstructive parking and have marked Keep Clears to the west of the former Police Station. Nevertheless parking continues to take place there sometimes obstructing access for longer vehicles into the new development site opposite. The proposals therefore were intended to reinforce the general practice of parking on the south side and to replace the Keep Clear markings with yellow lines. The net impact on legitimate parking opportunity was intended to be minimal but it is recognised that up to **4 vehicles do regularly park on the proposed restrictions** and that residents with no private parking facilities are anxious to maximise parking opportunity.

(v) The Old Market – potential loss of 20 spaces

This street currently has no formal restrictions or Keep Clear markings. It contains a lay-by for 3 cars and an off-street car park with 16 spaces. In addition, **approximately 20 vehicles park on-street there** daily. There are instances of obstruction of the pavements, damage to the landscaping and difficulty for large vehicles negotiating the parked cars. In view of the fact that the charges proposed for The Old Market car park may worsen the current position, daytime (Monday to Saturday 8am-6pm) restrictions were proposed to improve the environment and protect the residents and deliveries from obstructive parking.

However, in view of objections from 4 residents that have no private parking facilities and the significant number of cars displaced from this area I am minded to suggest a reduction in the advertised proposals here and I am currently seeking the views of those residents that may have supported the restrictions.

A possible relaxation that simply dealt with the obstruction to large emergency, cleansing or delivery vehicles **would reduce the usual parking opportunities lost from 20 spaces to around 2- 3 cars.**

(vi) West Street – potential loss of 6 spaces

Existing restrictions here are on the west side of the street from the junction with West End Gardens to south of the Parish Church. Additional restrictions were proposed on both sides of the street at the S bend through the viaduct arches. There are some Keep Clear markings here and parking off the carriageway north of Snaith's Field would not be affected. We could retain the status quo here as the proposal was simply to ensure no parking on the carriageway.

Therefore, aside from The Old Market, in practice we are looking at less than 10 spaces lost across the whole town centre, none of which are on the High Street.

Footnote: Obstruction offences

In 2009 and 2010, Stockton Council's Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers were called to four of the streets covered in the proposed parking restrictions Order on no fewer than 400 occasions resulting in 750 actions, mainly the issue of removal notices.

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3. Car parking charges and the impact on shops and businesses

The proposals do not include any changes to parking on Yarm High Street.

None of the proposals affect the parking arrangement in the High Street which continues to provide parking for 333 cars (206 in the Disc zone and 127 in the Long stay area).

During the public consultation in 2009, a recurring theme from the Yarm Chamber of Trade, its members and Yarm Town Council was for longer permitted parking than the Disc Zone allows in order to provide somewhere shoppers could be directed to if they wanted to park a little longer than the 2 hour Disc zone limit.

We considered the suggestion of amending the Disc zone regulations to 3 or 4 hours and reducing the hours that it operated but the potential loss of parking opportunity due to longer stays was considered to be counter-productive to the needs of Yarm as it would simply encourage more all day parking in the Disc zone (moving the car just once per day).

We also considered an option to change part of the Disc zone to a longer period but this was considered impractical in terms of enforcement and the additional street clutter of regulatory signs.

Instead we are proposing to change two small off-street car parks from all day free parking to 'pay & display' for those customers and visitors that currently are unable to find a space for longer than 2 hours. The numbers are quite small – 23 spaces at Castle Dyke Wynd car park and 16 at The Old Market car park, where workers and students currently take up most of the spaces for the whole day.

A number of objectors (approximately 57) stated that the parking fees were too high and that it would cost shop workers £8 - £9 per day to continue to park at these locations. The Council did not intend that workers paid to park all day but rather that the car parks were reserved for customers and visitors.

In this respect we are placing the needs of customers/visitors above the convenience of workers and students. The Chamber of Trade endorsed this priority in several discussions with them.

Workforce parking

We continue to work with private landowners to release vacant or underused land for additional long stay parking. However, given that the quantity of parking overall in Yarm is expected to change very little as a result of the proposals, the net effect is that shop workers and students currently taking convenient parking spaces early on a morning will be displaced and shoppers and visitors currently restricted to the streets if they need longer than 2 hours parking will know where to find medium stay car parking facilities.

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4. Miscellaneous issues raised by objectors

Question - How many people objected?

There are 296 statutory objectors. In addition there were 8 petitions submitted. A further 17 objections were received after the deadline of 27 January 2011. There were a small number of objectors with no name and/or address.

Question - Why don't you wait until there is a long stay car park provided in Yarm before you bring in these proposals?

The Council has spent several years exploring the opportunity to provide a large long stay car park for Yarm culminating in the 2009 consultation exercise that suggested the most likely site was the Brickyard allotments. During the feedback on the consultation, it was accepted that the Brickyard allotments site would not proceed but that action still needed to be taken to provide some additional long stay parking on smaller sites and some medium stay flexible parking (2-4 hours). Residents also wanted some immediate action taken against the worst of the obstructive parking. The Council is continuing to discuss additional long stay parking with private landowners but feels that the other proposals can come forward independently as the net impact on overall parking supply is minimal (around 10 spaces if The Old Market proposals do not proceed).

Question - Will the proposals make it more difficult for people with blue badges to park in Yarm?

No. The proposals do not include any changes to Yarm High Street and Stockton does not charge blue badge holders to park in any off-street pay & display car parks. The proposed waiting restrictions in the streets behind the High Street do not include any loading bans therefore normal blue badge guidance on parking on yellow lines would apply. We could also consider designated disabled bays in The Old Market and Castle Dyke Wynd car parks.

Question - Will the proposals make it more difficult for people attending the Parish Church?

No. The proposals do not include any changes to West Street in the vicinity of the Parish Church and existing restrictions will contain an exemption for funeral corteges and wedding cars. The Council is aware that churchgoers do use The Old Market car park on a Saturday and that will be an issue for the Appeals Committee to consider.

Other points raised include the need for Pay and Display on the High Street, Park and Ride facilities for Yarm, 20mph zones and action taken against Yarm School students but these are not considered material to the advertised proposals

Meeting Arrangements - Yarm

Proposed No Waiting times and introduction of charges in off street car parks

Any outstanding objections to the above proposals will be referred to the Council's Appeals and Complaints Committee for consideration. **A meeting of the Committee has been arranged for 14 March 2011 at 9.30 am in the Baptist Tabernacle Auditorium, The Square, Stockton.** This venue is an alternative to Stockton Town Hall, where the committee usually meets, and is in response to the number of objections received and the significant public interest in this issue. The Tabernacle will accommodate 550 people and places in the meeting room will be allocated, on the day, on a first come first served basis.

Ahead of the meeting, members of the committee will receive agenda papers, providing details of the outstanding objections, including the number of objections received. Copies of those papers will be available for you to view and print, via the Council's web site, on or around Friday 4 March 2011.

You'll appreciate that if the number wishing to attend the meeting is high it may not be possible for every person wishing to speak to do so. It will therefore be necessary to limit the number of speakers and the time allocated to each of them.

It would be helpful to the committee if you could indicate, at this stage, whether you would like to speak at the meeting and what issues you wish to raise. The committee is anxious to identify key speakers, representing groups of objectors, who have similar concerns about the proposals. It is anticipated that, following representation from such people, the majority of, if not all, objections will have been presented to the committee. The chairman of the committee is likely to allow other objectors to make points about the proposals, not raised by previous speakers. However, he will not allow a series of objectors to make the same, or similar points, as this will lead to an unnecessarily protracted meeting and would not assist the committee in arriving at recommendations.

Objections received appear to centre on the following main areas.

1. Proposed introduction of parking charges at Yarm Rail Halt
2. Proposed introduction of waiting restrictions and the impact on residents
3. Proposed introduction of car parking charges, in the 2 long stay off street car parks in Yarm, and the impact on shops and businesses.

Please could you inform Democratic Services whether you wish to speak at the meeting and what area(s) of objection (see above) you would wish to speak on. A response by Friday 4th March 2011 would be appreciated.

Please could you respond via the following e mail DemocraticServices@stockton.gov.uk

If e mailing is not convenient for you please telephone Democratic Services on 01642 528173.