

Planning & Environment Committee

Date:	6 November 2018
Title:	High Street Parking Permit Request
Contact Officer:	Graham Hunt, Town Clerk

Purpose of Report

1. To provide background on a request from a resident to extend the existing car park permit provision to allow permit holders to park in the High Street Car Park on Non-Market Days.

Background

2. The same resident requested that the opposite be considered by the Town Council at the Planning & Environment Committee meeting on 14 August 2018 – i.e. “to extend the existing car park permit provision to allow permit holders to park in the High Street Car Park on Market Days.” The discussion was minuted: “It was felt that to allow permit holders to park in the High Street car park all day would be to the detriment of the businesses and shops in the Town Centre. The one hour parking in the High Street car park ensured a guaranteed quick turnover of parked vehicles freeing up spaces which was appreciated by visitors coming into town by car. Thame was one of very few towns that offered free car parking which made Thame an attractive place to shop.” It was additionally resolved that **“The terms and conditions on which Car Parking Permits are issued remain unchanged.”**
3. For many years, as a gesture of goodwill, Thame Town Council has offered residents of the immediate town centre with no off street parking, the use of Town Council controlled parking in the Upper High Street, on non-market days, via a permit scheme (limited to 2 permits per household). A charge of £50 per annum was introduced in 2009 to bring the scheme in line with other resident parking schemes in Oxfordshire. Each permit is associated with a specific vehicle.
4. There are currently 30 permits issued. The Parking Attendants record usage during controlled hours. Thursday/Friday/Saturday are the busiest days with 12 to 16 permits in use, while Monday/Wednesday have between 5 and 9 permits in use. From the records it seems that around 50% are “all day” parkers.
5. One of the existing permit holders (since February 2018) has asked if his permit could be extended to allow all day parking in the 1 hour High Street Car Park, on Non-Market Days. No explanation has been provided as to why, but it is assumed that it is because this car park is closer to his household.
6. The High Street car park has 39 regular spaces and is almost always full, but with regular turnover of spaces. Assuming that the average stay in the one hour controlled parking in the High Street Car Park is 40 minutes, the removal of one space would inconvenience 15 car drivers and their passengers each day. Additionally, access would have to be given to all permit holders, and assuming 5 took up the extension, then the inconvenience extends to 75 car drivers and their passengers each day.
7. The Upper High Street car park (where permits are currently used) has approximately 130 regular spaces. It can sometimes be full even on non-market days when its full capacity is available. However, because there is usually spare capacity, the removal of spaces through the permit scheme rarely inconveniences any other car driver and their passengers. Even if permanently full,

with an average stay of 2 hours, the inconvenience would be to 4 as opposed to 15 car drivers and their passengers for each space used, each day.

8. Officers have considered if a trial could be executed to establish actual impact, but there is no way of establishing how many additional drivers are actually inconvenienced – those impacted will have simply tried to park and then driven away. Impact can only be established on a potential basis, through the assumptions as defined above.
9. Officers' expectation is that residents of Town Centre housing who choose to live in accommodation with no parking provision should be **either** not reliant on cars, **or** if they are reliant, to make their own arrangements for legal car parking, private or otherwise.
10. Since the last report on 14 August 2018, a further query has been made to Oxfordshire County Council to establish the latest position on the legality of the Town Council taking on responsibility for the enforcement of the 2 hour on-street free parking. If that is now possible, then as the resident has suggested, that may provide more flexibility in where parking permits may be used in the future, although it would probably still be only on the periphery of the town centre, and not in the town centre itself.
11. The permit holder has requested that Council make the decision, rather than officers, so this report is being tabled for the Planning & Environment Committee for their decision. The resident will be making their own presentation on the request and has also suggested that they would be circulating a report in advance. At the declared deadline of around noon on 31/10/18, that report had not been received.