

Knutsford Town Council

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PARKING REVIEW STATUTORY CONSULTATION 2023

ON-STREET PARKING

The proposals for Knutsford's on street parking are to reduce all restricted on-street parking to 30 minutes, except on Moorside which would reduce to 1 hour. The proposals no-return limits increase by 1 hour. The net effect is a reduction in the usability of on-street parking.

The Town Council strongly objects to these proposals and considers no changes should be introduced to on-street parking within Knutsford.

The on-street parking limits were previously 30 minutes across the main shopping streets. This was an issue raised in the 2010 Town Plan, following which Cheshire East Council agreed to increase the times to 1 hour. There has been no material change in the need for on-street parking in Knutsford and therefore there is no logic or justification in changing the restrictions against the clearly stated wishes of the local community.

The Knutsford Business community is particularly concerned by the reduction in on-street parking usability and the impact it will have on footfall to their businesses. The on-street parking provision is particularly used by '*nip in and grab*' shoppers. These are shoppers who are visiting the town centre for a specific reason (for example to visit the pharmacy, post/pick up a parcel or buy from a specific shop) and the one-hour restriction provides sufficient time for them to '*and while I'm here*' shop. The changes to on-street parking will remove this time. It will result in fewer visits to local businesses at a time when independent retail and small town centres are struggling the most. The fear of getting a parking ticket will mean these shoppers return to their cars after doing their primary task; it is a fallacy to believe these shoppers will pay to park instead as this is the unplanned shopping on top of their primary visit.

The bays on Hillside Road, King Street (north of Drury Lane) and Ruskin Court are presently limited to two hours. These provide a longer period of parking for those parking near the Knutsford entrance to Tatton Park and walking into the park for recreation and exercise (particularly including dog walkers). The reduction in parking time will effectively render these bays useless as there will be insufficient time to access Tatton Park nor to visit the Town Centre properly (and they are far enough from the main shopping areas to be used less by convenience shoppers limited to 30 minutes). It is also likely that these changes will displace parking further down Hillside Road to the disruption of residents and onto Mereheath

Lane/Garden Road, where parking is already challenging at peak times. There is no justification for reducing the on-street parking time in this location.

The bays on Green Street are also presently limited to two hours and proposed for reduction to 30 minutes. This change will simply displace parking onto the A50 (Manchester Road) or, as it is a quieter street, result in under-utilised parking bays.

The bays on Moorside are presently limited to two hours and these are proposed to reduce to 1 hour. These are next to The Moor, Knutsford's Green Flag Park and are well used by families and visitors to the Moor. A reduction to 1 hour will reduce the usability of the park for these people and it will reduce their ability to 'while I'm here' shop. There is no justification for reducing the on-street parking time in this location.

More fundamentally, the 'statement of reasons' for the changes states (*inter alia*):

The changes to the permitted length of stay on-street has the potential to encourage greater use of car parks. This has the potential to reduce the volume of parked traffic on town centre streets and improve the safety of the pedestrian and cyclist environment.

On-street parking places subject to proposals are predominantly located in the centre of each town. Discouraging travel by car into the heart of the town centre would help to improve air quality and environment for all pedestrians and cyclists in line with the adopted Corporate Plan (2021 – 2025), Local Transport Plan, Town Centre Vitality Plans and Carbon Neutral Action Plan.

however, the Town Council considers that the proposals for Knutsford are explicitly contrary to these reasons. The changes to on-street parking restrictions will instead:

- a) Result in a greater volume of traffic movement on our narrow streets with potentially double the number of car movements reversing into/emerging from parking bays. This would **reduce** the safety of pedestrians and cyclists and increase air pollution (more start/stop within the town centre streets)
- b) Access to car parks within Knutsford is via our main shopping streets. Therefore, displacement of on-street parking into the car parks **will not reduce the number of cars within the town centre**. The Town Council does not believe the change in strategy will encourage those who currently utilise the free on-street parking when visiting the town centre to switch to active travel modes.

The reduced on-street parking times will also damage the wellbeing of our residents. Those who do use the on-street parking will be faced with increased anxiety to return to their vehicles to avoid parking fines – whether that is whilst waiting in the queue at the Post Office (with queues getting longer now all the banks have closed) or not being able to have that brief catch up with a friend they bump into. This will take some of the joy out of using the town centre, something no town centre can afford to do.

OFF-STREET PARKING

The Town Council recognises that Cheshire East Council is looking to rationalise parking charges across the borough and the financial challenges it is facing and welcomes the proposals to reduce parking fees on certain tariffs in Knutsford car parks. However, the Town Council objects to the proposals where they result in increased parking fees. Whilst it is recognised the council has not increased parking fees in a number of years, in the current economic climate and cost of living challenges facing our residents, visitors and local businesses, it is not considered the appropriate time to increase parking charges and the Town Council is concerned it will discourage trips to the town centre. With an expected increase in income of

just £1,381, it is considered the demands of the MTFS do not justify the potential harm to the town centre from these changes.

The Town Council has no objection to the proposal to change Old Market Place car park from a long stay to short stay car park.

COACH PARKING

The Town Council is disappointed that the proposals fail to make adequate provision for coach parking in Knutsford, something the Town Council has been raising with Cheshire East Council for a number of years. The present coach parking provision is not sufficient:

- Tatton Street car park has a height restriction barrier preventing coaches from accessing the car park
- The on-street parking on Tatton Street makes access/egress challenging for cars and extremely challenging for coaches

Serendipitously, the issue was well illustrated on Saturday 21st October. A coach dropped off passengers outside the Lost and Found but was unable to access coach parking so instead occupied 5 bays on the King Street car park, reducing the availability of parking for other town centre users. The appendix illustrates the problem and solution.

The Town Council restates its previous call for Cheshire East Council to:

- a) Convert the coach parking on Tatton Street car park to ordinary parking bays to increase car parking provision within Knutsford
- b) Designate the former taxi-rank parking at the Bexton Road bus station as coach parking
- c) Work with Knutsford Town Council on a management system for coach parking to enable the Town Council to market Knutsford as a coach friendly town and increase the number of coach trips to Knutsford

APPENDIX: COACH PARKING PHOTOGRAPHS



Coach unable to park elsewhere occupying 5 bays on King Street car park instead.



The entrance to the Tatton Street car park – the only coach parking in Kntusford. Showing the challenging entrance and height restriction barrier.



The solution: ample space for designated coach parking at the Bexton Road Bus Station



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