

## Proposed Amendments to Parking Restrictions – Mount Pleasant Road / Mount Pleasant Avenue, Royal Tunbridge Wells

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<b>Originating Authority</b>	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Kent County Council
<b>Final Decision Taker</b>	Kent County Council
<b>Exemption</b>	Non-exempt
<b>Classification</b>	For Recommendation

### Recommendation:

- That the Board endorses the making of Orders B, C, D, E and F as set out in the report

## 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Proposals for the Calverley Square development include amendments to the highway layout. To ensure that the revised arrangements function properly, various alterations to waiting and traffic restrictions are necessary and have been advertised. This report details those proposals together with the comments received during a public consultation exercise plus our responses and recommendations.

1.2 The Borough has a clear and ambitious vision to “grow our role as the cultural centre of the Kent & Sussex High Weald, so that by 2024 the borough of Tunbridge Wells is nationally recognised for its vibrant cultural provision”. Having a modern theatre sits at the heart of this vision. The commitment to deliver a modern theatre fit for the 21st Century and deliver new office space on Mount Pleasant Avenue Car Park are key components of the Council’s Five Year Plan. The Calverley Square development will therefore provide:

- A new 1,200 seat theatre that is able to stage high quality touring shows;
- A new shared-use building including accommodation for civic functions and offices for TWBC and third party organisations;
- An underground car park (approximately 260 car park spaces) partly under the office building and extending under part of Calverley Grounds; and
- Local remodelling of the public realm associated with the above buildings and car park.

- 1.3 The development will deliver substantial economic benefits as demonstrated by the Wider Economic Benefits reports published by the applicant. As tested by the Local Planning Authority through independent professional advice (Lichfields report) the economic benefits will be in the order of £24.3m GVA (Gross Value Added) per annum with around half of this net economic benefit retained in the borough with the rest in the wider region.
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## **2 HIGHWAY CHANGES PROPOSED AS PART OF CALVERLEY SQUARE DEVELOPMENT**

- 2.1 A number of highway amendments are proposed as part of the Calverley Square development. These include:-
- Formation of a public realm feature on the southern-most east/west section of Mount Pleasant Avenue and narrowed trackway for vehicles.
  - Formation of a raised table at the southern-most Mount Pleasant Road/Mount Pleasant Avenue junction.
  - An amended one-way system on part of Mount Pleasant Avenue.
  - An angled entrance to the replacement car park on Mount Pleasant Avenue.
  - Amendments to the kerb line on Mount Pleasant Road in front of the Great Hall to accommodate a loading bay and re-sited bus stops
- 2.2 To ensure that these alterations can function properly, Traffic Regulation Orders for amended restrictions have been advertised. The proposed restrictions are as follows:-
- The southern-most east/west section of Mount Pleasant Avenue to be subject to a prohibition on stopping, loading or unloading at all times.
  - A goods vehicle loading bay be created in front Sainsbury's on Mount Pleasant Road
  - The taxi bay on the southern-most east/west section of Mount Pleasant Avenue to be removed and relocated to the east side of Mount Pleasant Road
  - The single disabled bay currently on Mount Pleasant Road outside number 50 to be re-located to the north outside number 58 and enlarged to accommodate two cars.
  - The car club bay currently outside 42 Mount Pleasant Road to be re-located to the north outside number 62.
  - To accommodate the last three points, the current 1 hour limited waiting bay to be removed.
  - The double yellow line and permit parking bays on Mount Pleasant Avenue switch sides
  - Amended one way restriction in part of Mount Pleasant Avenue with vehicles to travel from west to east on the southern arm and south to north towards the new car park entrance.
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### **3 CONSULTATION AND RESPONSE**

- 3.1 Traffic Regulation Orders were advertised for the waiting restrictions on 2 November. An order for the one-way restriction in Mount Pleasant Avenue was advertised two weeks later. Each had a three week consultation period.
  - 3.2 The waiting restrictions were advertised on 5 separate orders which between them resulted in 85 responses. 4 of the responses were from bus companies and either asked questions about, or sought reassurances over, the loading bay/bus stop configuration and enforcement. The issues raised by bus companies have been addressed through dialogue with each of them.
  - 3.3 The 81 public responses were from 52 individuals with one person commenting on 4 proposals, 6 people responding 3 times and 14 people twice. Overall, their comments can be summarised as covering 10 separate issues, as detailed in the next section of this report.
  - 3.4 The proposed reversal of part of the one way arrangement in Mount Pleasant Avenue and extend the restriction to include the southern-most East – West section received no response when advertised and is not, therefore, brought before this Board for further consideration.
  - 3.5 A drawing at Appendix A shows the existing arrangement and parking restrictions. The proposed arrangements are shown at Appendix B. Appendix C lists the Traffic Regulation Orders and also shows the responses received in respect of each order.
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### **4 ISSUES RAISED IN RESPONSES**

- 4.1 As indicated in the preceding paragraph, all responses to the consultation are detailed, without personal information, at Appendix C. Also included under each submission is a response from Vectos, the transport planning consultant working for the main contractor (Mace) and responsible for delivering traffic management solutions.
- 4.2 The 52 public respondents, as opposed to bus companies, made many similar comments despite being submitted in respect of different restrictions. The objections raised, after discounting those based on inaccurate assumptions, can broadly be summarised as follows:-
  - The loss of public parking space on Mount Pleasant Road will inconvenience shoppers and affect retail trade.
  - Associated with the above, taxi bays are not well used during the daytime.
  - The prohibition on loading and unloading in Mount Pleasant Avenue will have a negative impact on residents and traders in the vicinity.
  - Creation of a loading bay on Mount Pleasant Road will be detrimental to highway safety – this was framed around a number of issues including problems for pedestrians crossing Mount Pleasant Road; conflict between pedestrians and goods being trolleyed across the footway; a worsening of

traffic conditions in a busy central area and, limited visibility for drivers emerging onto Mount Pleasant Road from Mount Pleasant Avenue.

- Accessibility/servicing issues for traders and residents on Mount Pleasant Road/Avenue – it is implied that the revised restrictions will cause problems for anybody wanting to deliver to or collect from commercial or residential premises.
- Additional taxi bays on Mount Pleasant Road will result in more hazardous manoeuvres as they try to join the main rank outside the station.
- Re-locating the disabled bay(s) up the hill will be a disadvantage to those using them.
- Concerns that coaches destined for theatre will park in loading bay and/or bus stops.
- Concerns that theatre trucks would use the loading bay and transport scenery etc across and along the footway.
- Objections in fairly broad terms to the prohibition of loading and unloading in the proposed public realm part of Mount Pleasant Avenue

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## **5 CLARIFICATION AND GENERAL RESPONSE TO OBJECTIONS**

- 5.1 Several respondents have assumed that bus stops are being moved away from the immediate area around the station or reduced in number, and raised objections on that basis. Neither is the case, however, and the proposals only involve their re-location 17m to the south.
- 5.2 Another misapprehension has been that the station taxi rank is being re-located up the hill, whereas in fact it is unaffected. It is only the current 'feeder bay' in Mount Pleasant Avenue which is being re-located to the southbound (east) side of Mount Pleasant Road.
- 5.3 Objections to the loss of free public parking on Mount Pleasant Road are understandable but need to be viewed in context. It is unusual in a town the size of Tunbridge Wells to retain free on-street parking space in a central shopping street. This proposal does not remove all such spaces from Mount Pleasant Road and approximately 18 would remain (with approximately 7 lost). Space is generally readily available in the town centre car parks, and the Calverley Square development itself will provide 261 spaces, an increase of 7 spaces over the current Great Hall car park.
- 5.4 Objections on the basis that the current taxi rank feeder bays are not well used do have some validity but it must be remembered that the bays are currently not in a very visible location. By re-locating them onto Mount Pleasant Road in front of retail premises, it is anticipated that they will become better used, especially when the theatre is in use. Because of the better inter-visibility between this bay and the main one outside the station, it is also hoped that there will be less double parking on the main rank.
- 5.5 The section of Mount Pleasant Avenue proposed to be subject to a loading prohibition does not have any frontage properties with only the sides of commercial premises abutting it. The proposed restriction should not, therefore,

have any significant detrimental impact on those properties, especially when the proposed loading bay on Mount Pleasant Road is taken into consideration.

- 5.6 The proposed loading bay on Mount Pleasant Road is primarily aimed at meeting the needs of Sainsbury's and other retail outlets in the Great Hall arcade. It can, however, be used by other premises in the area. It is not intended to be for the new theatre however, since that will have its own loading area. A management plan for the theatre could specifically prohibit vehicles from using this bay. In terms of pedestrian safety, a Road Safety Audit has been undertaken and the one issue raised as part of that process has been addressed by the design team. KCC have raised no objection in principle to the proposed works.
- 5.7 Taxi manoeuvring from the proposed bay to the station rank will, if anything, be improved over the existing arrangement since they will no longer have to exit a side street (Mount Pleasant Avenue) before crossing the road to join the rear of queuing taxis.
- 5.8 Moving the disabled parking bay up the hill should have negligible effect on its users and the one supporting comment welcomed the idea. Since the bays may be used by anybody visiting premises either up or down the hill, any dis-benefits should be offset by the benefits.
- 5.9 The bus stops can be restricted to prevent their use by coaches visiting the theatre.

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## **6 THE INDIVIDUAL RESTRICTIONS AND RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION**

### **6.1 ORDER A – The Kent County Council (Mount Pleasant Avenue, Tunbridge Wells)(Prohibition of Waiting, Loading and Unloading) No.5 Order 2018**

This proposal would prohibit stopping for any purpose in the southern most east-west section of Mount Pleasant Avenue.

Because the process for making an order of this type varies from that applying to the other orders being considered, this matter cannot at the present time be resolved at JTB. Options are currently being explored. The order is only mentioned in this report for the sake of completeness.

### **6.2 ORDER B – The Kent County Council (Mount Pleasant Avenue, Tunbridge Wells)(Prohibition of Waiting) No. 6 Order 2018**

This proposal would result in a double yellow line currently on the western side of Mount Pleasant Avenue being removed and re-introduced on the eastern side.

This restriction relates to a relocation of the present parking bays (Order C) from one side of Mount Pleasant Avenue to the other. This amendment allows

vehicles to park on the nearside of the carriageway – since the direction of flow is also being reversed on this section of Mount Pleasant Avenue.

The proposal is logical in traffic management terms and no sound reason for objection has been raised. It is therefore recommended that this restriction be implemented.

**6.3 ORDER C – The Kent County Council Zone C (Residents Parking) (Tunbridge Wells) Order 2009 (Amendment) Order 2018**

This proposal compliments Order B above in that it moves the parking bays currently on the eastern side of Mount Pleasant Avenue to the western side.

No responses were received in respect of this proposal and the order can, therefore, be made providing that Order B is also endorsed.

**6.4 ORDER D – The Kent County Council (Mount Pleasant Road, Tunbridge Wells) (Traffic Restrictions) Order 2018**

This proposal involves the revocation of existing parking bays for taxis on Mount Pleasant Avenue (beside Sainsbury's) plus disabled and car club bays on Mount Pleasant Road. One hour general use parking bays on part of Mount Pleasant Road are also removed.

The eastern side of Mount Pleasant Road between its two junctions with Mount Pleasant Avenue would then be subject to new restrictions providing a taxi bay, with one space more than in its present location, a relocated car club bay and two disabled parking bays (instead of the one which now exists).

Objections to this arrangement largely revolve around the loss of one hour parking for general use. As has been emphasised earlier in this report, taking on and off-street facilities into account, the overall number of parking bays in the locality will remain constant once the new car park is operational. With additional space for taxis plus an additional disabled parking bay, there are other benefits with the proposed arrangement.

It is recommended that this order be made in the form advertised.

**6.5 ORDER E – The Kent County Council (Mount Pleasant Road, Tunbridge Wells) (Provision of Goods Vehicle Loading Bay) No.1 Order 2018**

This order supports the provision of a dedicated loading bay for goods vehicles in front of the Great Hall. Currently vehicles delivering to Sainsbury's and other local businesses park in Mount Pleasant Avenue, often (illegally) using the taxi bay to do so. This is not an ideal situation irrespective of the Calverley Square development. Creation of a loading bay ensures that this operation takes place in a specific location and the restriction ensures, as far as is possible, that the bay is kept clear of other vehicles.

It is recommended that the order be made in the form advertised.

6.6 **ORDER F – The Kent County Council (Mount Pleasant Avenue, The Borough of Tunbridge Wells) (One Way Streets) Order 2018**

This proposal restricts flow to one way along Mount Pleasant Avenue from its southerly junction with Mount Pleasant Road in a west to east and then south to north direction until the access to the proposed car park.

There were no comments submitted in respect of this order so it does not, therefore, require a Member recommendation to proceed.

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## **7 CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 Members are reminded that the Calverley Square development has received planning consent so the layout involving a narrowed trackway on part of Mount Pleasant Avenue is not itself an issue for debate.
- 7.2 Although not wholly dependent on each of the other restrictions being implemented, there is a close relationship between all of those proposed, with the ideal arrangement being that all are introduced as advertised.
- 7.3 Removal of the present taxi bay from Mount Pleasant Avenue is necessary to allow the single track element to function. Waiting, loading and unloading cannot be accommodated in that section of road once it is narrowed although, during construction, a temporary traffic regulation order could be implemented to address this issue.
- 7.4 All the remaining proposed restrictions either relate directly to those two issues or are required as a consequence to fully and satisfactorily manage parking in the vicinity of the Calverley Square development.
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### **Appendices to the Report**

- Appendix A – Existing traffic and parking restrictions
- Appendix B – Proposed traffic and parking restrictions
- Appendix C – Consultation responses and comment