

Parking Restrictions – Major York's Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells

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

Recommendation:

- That the Board endorses the proposed amendments to parking restrictions in Major York's Road, Tunbridge Wells

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At the January meeting of this Board, the Chairman requested that a report be brought to the next meeting in respect of parking on Major York's Road in Tunbridge Wells.
- 1.2 The purpose of that request was to assess whether there was any need for additional restrictions to assist traffic flow following comments about delays caused by parked vehicles.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Major York's Road in Tunbridge Wells, is a C class road passing between the A264 Langton Road/Bishops Down to the north-west and the A26 London Road/Eridge Road to the south-east. It is approximately 840m in length and crosses Tunbridge Wells Common. There is one junction at its mid point with Hungershall Park/Fir Tree Road.
- 2.2 The carriageway width in Major York's Road varies between about 6.8m and 7.5m with the wider sections generally being on the lower part to the south-east of Hungershall Park.
- 2.3 There are no residential premises with direct frontage to the road although several derive vehicular and pedestrian access from it. A car park, open to the public and operated by the landowner, has access from the road at its south-eastern end. A Zebra crossing was introduced early in 2018 immediately to the north-west of the car park entrance. Other paths across the Common also intersect with Major York's Road,

- 2.4 There is no footway on the south-western side of the road but one is present along the north-eastern side, albeit at a higher level towards the mid section.
- 2.5 Restrictions on parking in Major York's Road have been in place for many years, with yellow lines at the south-eastern end having been present since at least the early 1980's. These have been added to over the years, with designated parking bays for time limited waiting having also been introduced to the north-west of the car park in 2003. This restriction was amended in 2009 to allow an exemption for Zone A permit holders.
- 2.6 Currently, parking in the road takes place along four separate sections on the south-western side. The only designated area is 74m of shared use space towards the south-eastern end. This allows parking for two hours between 8am and 6pm on Mondays to Saturdays with an exemption for Zone A permit holders.
- 2.7 Beyond that, but on the same side of the road, are three separate sections where no restrictions apply. These are 125m, 70m and 58m in length as you progress north-westwards towards the A264.
- 2.8 In terms of potential parking capacity, these four areas can accommodate approximately 13, 23, 12 and 10 average sized cars respectively. With only the first of these areas controlled by parking restrictions, however, it needs to be remembered that parking in the other three unregulated sections is only tolerated whilst it causes no problems – a highway being for the purpose of movement by vehicles and pedestrians, and not for parking.

3. THE ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 For many years, comments have been made about hold-ups to through traffic caused by parking along Major York's Road. This has led to an increasing amount of yellow lining being introduced to address the issue, with the most recent additions being in 2017 between the junctions with Hungershall Park and the driveway to Nevill Park.
- 3.2 No detailed assessment of congestion or queuing has taken place for the purposes of this report, but there is no doubt that this issue does arise quite frequently. Observation suggests that two average sized cars can pass each other where parking takes place but that HGV's and PSV's sometimes have difficulty with larger cars. Two lorries or buses cannot pass each other in those sections.
- 3.3 Although it is sometimes suggested that there is a highway safety issue, that is not borne out by any factual evidence. Since 2014, there have been 4 recorded crashes (i.e. ones involving personal injury) along the length of Major York's Road, excluding the junctions at each end. Whilst the details of each have not been assessed in any way, the small number in three different locations does not suggest a highway safety problem.

- 3.4 Another issue of concern, in particular to the Commons Conservators, is the increasing tendency to park partly on the kerb/grassed edge of the Common. With cars generally becoming larger and greater numbers of 4x4 type vehicles in use, drivers often feel the need, and find it easier, to park partly off the carriageway. This practice is causing damage to the edge of the Common over an extended length. Apart from the resulting unsightly appearance, the damage will need repairing to avoid further erosion but that work would be pointless if vehicles can still park there.

4. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 4.1 There are two realistic courses of action. The present situation could be allowed to continue on the basis that there is little evidence of a highway safety issue and congestion is relatively limited, not affecting other routes to any noticeable extent. This would however, not address any of the issues being raised as concerns.
- 4.2 The other option would be to impose further restrictions in an effort to ease traffic movement and prevent further damage to the Common. In view of the fact that the lower (south-eastern) half of Major York's Road is wider and complaints about delays and damage less prevalent, it is only that part between Hungershall Park and Langton Road where it is considered appropriate to remove the ability to park.

5. CONSIDERATION OF OPTIONS

- 5.1 The first option above would allow people to continue parking, which is only of benefit to a small number, and would arguably help to maintain lower traffic speeds. The negative aspects of 'no action' are that congestion and delays would continue, and possibly worsen as traffic levels rise, and the Common would continue to be degraded.
- 5.2 The second option eases traffic flow and allows for restoration and continued maintenance of the Common. The main possible disadvantage is that traffic speeds could increase. This has been discussed with KCC who, as highway authority, are responsible for most aspects of highway operations. They have indicated that this particular concern (speed of traffic) is not considered to be an over-riding factor.
- 5.3 The other issue which requires consideration with any proposed introduction of new restrictions on waiting or parking is that of displacement parking. As was noted earlier in this report, the removal of all parking on the upper section of Major York's Road would affect 22 vehicles.
- 5.4 Although restrictions could be imposed on part of the area used for parking on the upper section, it is considered that this would offer few advantages whilst still retaining the present dis-benefits. A proposal for new restrictions would, therefore, involve double yellow lines over the full extent of the two remaining gaps on the south-western side of the road.

- 5.5 Whilst a highway authority must consider the impact of introducing new waiting restrictions, it is not required to find alternative parking facilities for any vehicles displaced as a consequence. The Borough provides public car parks for the purpose of both long and short-stay parking and many of these currently operate within capacity so alternatives to parking on-street do exist. At present, the nearest viable off-street alternative parking facility is at the Torrington Car Park which is approximately 1.2km from the top (north-western) end of Major York's Road. This equates to approximately 15 minutes walking time and is, therefore, well within the 2km sometimes recommended as being a maximum reasonable walking distance.

6. PROPOSED COURSE OF ACTION

- 6.1 To resolve the problems which have been highlighted (congestion/delays and damage to the Common) it is proposed to introduce an 'At Any Time' restriction (i.e. double yellow lines) in the two currently unrestricted sections of carriageway on Major York's Road between its junctions with Hungershall Park and Langton Road.
- 6.2 This would involve new double yellow lines on the south-west side of Major York's Road between points 30m and 100m north-west of its junction with Hungershall Park Road and between points 170m north-west of its junction with Hungershall Park and 25m south-east of its junction with Nevill Park. This would be a total of 128m of additional double yellow lining. A drawing at Appendix A details the present and proposed arrangements.
- 6.3 The next course of action would be to advertise the proposal. If objections are received, they would need to be considered either by this Board or the KCC Cabinet Member, depending on the volume – up to 5 would be referred to the Member for resolution.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Calls for the removal of all parking on the north-western half of Major York's Road have increased in recent times, generally based around delays to through traffic. An added dimension is the damage being caused to the Common by parking partly off the carriageway. The time would now appear right to resolve these issues by prohibiting all parking on the section of road concerned.

Appendices to the Report

- Appendix A – Existing and proposed parking restrictions