



The Newtown Residents' Association Submission on the Wellington City Council Draft Parking Policy. June 8th 2020.

Introduction

The Newtown Residents' Association is the Incorporated Society representing Newtown and its surrounding suburbs. We are an active local group who take a keen interest in the community and local issues. We are concerned with maintaining and improving our area's liveability, connectedness and sustainability and working to make our community a thriving, diverse, great place to live.

Submission

Overview

We support the principles and the proposed parking hierarchies for the different areas as outlined in the draft policy.

We understand that the implementation of these policies will follow a process of area based planning so that the conditions can be tailored for local circumstances.

Local area concerns

This submission concentrates primarily on issues affecting the residents of Newtown and the surrounding area. We value a safe, affordable, attractive neighbourhood where everyone is welcome. Our streets and public places need to support this vision and values.

Suburban Centre or Key Transport Route?

In Newtown our suburban centre is also a key transport route. Riddiford St through Constable St to Kilbirnie and on to the airport is already a major traffic route, and in future this could be added to if the light rail route to the Zoo and onwards is chosen. We note that very different parking priorities are proposed for key transport routes from those for suburban centres. The only high priority on a transport route is bus stops, while in the commercial and shopping precincts there are a range of priority uses including mobility parks, urban design elements, bicycle/micro mobility parks and short stay parks.

Riddiford St and Constable St are at the heart of our Newtown community. The streetscape has been designed to enhance community connections, with median strips and pedestrian

refuges in Riddiford St a feature. The speed limit is 40kph, and we have been advocating that this should be reduced to 30kph. For many years the Newtown Residents' Association has been submitting, across a wide range of council policies and plans, that central Newtown should be a slow zone on the transport corridor in a way that keeps public transport in the traffic lane and preserves the amenities and local features that put people first.

We would object strongly if 'ease of movement' for vehicles travelling through was prioritised over community placemaking for those who live, work and play here.

We support applying the parking hierarchies outlined for suburban centres to the streets of central Newtown. There are aspects of how these are implemented that should be discussed in area based planning, and we would like to be involved in this. As an addition to this, we would like to add an objective to the parking policy which makes it easier for businesses to get consent to repurpose parking spaces which could be used for seating/dining/coffee drinking, where doing so would not infringe upon mobility car parks. A current attempt to get permission to do this has taken several weeks and still has no resolution, losing an opportunity to make Newtown streets more people-friendly at a time when this could have been very valuable to businesses suffering from covid-19 restrictions.

Place and Movement Framework

We note that the Draft Parking Policy [section 2.2.3] discusses having a Place and Movement Framework to guide decision-making by categorising the streets within different areas of the city. This is described as a tool that can complement the transport hierarchy and the parking space hierarchy. This seems like a useful way forward, so long as the framework is developed with a co-design process as part of area based planning.

Mobility Parking

We are pleased to see that mobility parks are given high priority in the Suburban Centre. Currently, users experience difficulty in accessing these when needed. We recommend extending the number of mobility parks in our Suburban Centre, and monitoring them more stringently.

The draft gives only moderate priority in the hierarchy for mobility parking in residential streets, and this needs further consideration. There are local residents who are highly dependent on mobility parking and have no access to off street parking. Wellington City Council has assisted some of these residents by designating mobility car parks outside their homes. This is a compassionate and practical approach to inclusivity for these members of our community and we would hope that this facility would be extended to others as the need arises. We also suggest that when someone is suddenly struck with a debilitating illness or injury the parking policy should allow temporary mobility parking to be rapidly deployed, in a similar way that a building site, or road works, can close off parking spaces for promptly required work access. Mobility Parking Permit cards can be rapidly issued based

on a medical certificate, but establishing residential mobility parks is a very slow process. A temporary set up using road cones while the permanent parking space is gazetted, consulted on and formally painted and sign posted following due process could be part of the policy.

We also submit that these mobility parking spaces should be mapped online and sign posted in the street slightly differently by WCC. Currently there is no distinction between these spaces and short term public ones, when in fact they are part of the supported living arrangements for the mobility card holder in question.

Parking Priorities in the Residential Streets

We support the high priority given to **residents parking** in the draft hierarchy for City Fringe and Inner City Suburbs such as Newtown. We also support the low priority given to commuter parking. Of course at present, with 83% of the parking in Newtown being free and unrestricted, commuters have just as much priority as the majority of residents.

As has been discussed before, there is a great deal of concern about the parking pressures in Newtown. Many cars from out of the area are parked here during the day while their owners are at work, either within Newtown, for instance at the hospital, or in the city – Newtown appears to have become an informal ‘park and ride’ destination for people catching buses to the CBD.

In the draft Policy [Section 4.5.5] it is suggested that where there is severe parking pressure (as there is in Newtown) the existing parking scheme will be replaced by a new scheme based on a short stay (P120) approach with “resident exempt” permits for eligible residents. We have been advocating for this to be adopted so we welcome this proposal, although the details of where and when this is applied needs further discussion. In some situations this might be necessary 24 hrs, 7 days a week, and in others restrictions that apply during business hours only might be more appropriate.

We also cautiously approve of **car share parks** being given high priority. We understand that the details of any parking plan will be negotiated through area based planning so we expect that the balance of space for dedicated residents’ parks and car share schemes will be worked out in that forum. We suggest that Newtown Avenue be considered as a suitable place for car share parks, and in addition suggest that EV charging stations for shared cars could be positioned here. This would give easy access for residents in the new apartments on the former Salvation Army site, which have no onsite parking of any sort.

Residents’ Parking Permits

Unfortunately extending residents’ parking and issuing more permits has its own complications. Even with the proposed priorities for issuing permits, essentially rationing

availability, there are likely to be more people wanting permits than parking places available.

In a low income area not everyone will be able to afford the fee for a parking permit. This will become more of an issue if the fees increase as a tool for managing demand, as foreshadowed in *Section 4.5.1: Proposed approach for pricing Council parking*.

If the residents' parking zones cover most of the residential area, residents unable to afford the permit fee or unable to get one because they do not meet the criteria for permit priority, would be left with extremely limited access to parking, and those who can afford it would have no guarantee of getting what they are paying for.

We also submit that the hierarchy outlined for granting permits needs fine tuning. We would like to see more emphasis on permits being granted on the basis of need. The priority for mobility card holders is one aspect of this, but we note that the policy document acknowledges "...those who find active and public transport does not meet their needs, such as disabled people, older people, and parents with young children..." [Sec 1.1.1] and one of the draft Policy Objectives is to "Support access for all — ensure disabled people, older people, people who are pregnant, and people with babies can access car parks throughout the city..." We would like to see a process for granting residential parking permits that reflects this objective.

Possible solutions need to be worked through as part of the proposed area based planning.

Area based planning

We are aware that developing a Newtown Parking Management Plan has already been agreed, and the current expectation is that this will be developed hand-in-hand with consultation on the Newtown Connections project, planned for later this year.

Our concern about this is that the timeframe for Newtown Connections is constantly being extended, and that when it does get underway the disputes over just where the cycle lanes will go are likely to be extended and difficult.

We suggest that when the Parking Policy has been adopted there are a number of issues specific to local parking that should be discussed with the local community and residents, key employers, service providers and business stakeholders. This can be done independently of the larger Newtown Connections project.

An example of this is fine-tuning of the proposed priorities for residents' parking permit eligibility.

Another issue is the involvement with key employers whose workers use on street parking. Wellington Hospital is the pre-eminent employer in the Newtown area, and the parking

pressure from Hospital employees taking advantage of the unrestricted parking in most of our streets is a source of major frustration for residents, and also for visitors to Newtown (including hospital outpatients and visitors). In the past CCDHB had a role for a Transport Planner, and we wonder whether reinstating this role would be beneficial. Certainly a transport plan for employees, including public transport arrangements for shift workers, would be a step forward. We suggest including the Greater Wellington Regional Council in this area based planning discussion.

We would like to get on with this as soon as possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. We would like the opportunity to speak to Councillors about it in the appropriate forum.

Rhona Carson

President, Newtown Residents' Association.

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