



The Newtown Residents' Association Submission to Wellington City Council about the Berhampore and Newtown Parking Scheme. October 8th 2023.

Introduction

The Newtown Residents' Association is the Incorporated Society representing Newtown and its surrounding suburbs. We are an active local group 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.

I am making this submission on behalf of the Association in this narrative fashion because the Survey Monkey form asks very individual questions that can't be answered by an organisation.

We would like to speak to this submission.

Submission

Parking Policy

We understand that this Parking Scheme is putting the Parking Policy that was agreed in 2020 into action. We have looked again at this policy and this submission is based on reflections on how this is being implemented.

In 2019 we made a submission to the consultation on the draft of the Parking Policy. We approved of a lot of what was in the draft, in particular the high priority given to residential parking, and we are pleased that this is reflected in this Parking Scheme. However there are issues that weren't part of the earlier consultation, such as the time limits of parking restrictions. The proposal for visitors' permits is new. This is welcome as an attempt to solve a problem identified in the first round, but again the details have been decided by WCC without local input, or certainly without opportunities for input that we were aware of.

Commuter Parking

This is a quote from our original submission – “The involvement with key employers is crucial. 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 area based planning discussions.”

In theory the employers and employees affected have had three years to get used to the idea that change is coming, but it is clear from the reactions to the proposals that little or no progress has been made on these issues. This is now urgent.

Area based planning

We supported the original proposal to develop local area-based parking plans in consultation with the local community and residents, key employers, service providers and business stakeholders, and we said that we would like to be involved in this planning.

We were pleased that this draft proposal was continued into the final policy. Principle E on p13 of the Policy document concludes –

“Local area-based parking plans would provide guidance to improve transport services and manage parking based on local circumstances. The Council could then make decisions on transport and parking management based on evidence and select from a wide range of tools to achieve the best use of the space.

Local area-based parking plans should be developed in discussion with the local community and residents, key employers, service providers and business stakeholders to consider local issues and ensure collaboration with others to resolve problems. “

We are disappointed that area based planning has not been implemented as proposed in the policy. In the years since the Parking Policy was agreed we have been waiting and asking for some action on this. The initial development of the Policy was facilitated by WCC Officers who concentrated on parking issues, but at some point parking became an adjunct to the development of cycleways and bus lanes. This has meant that a lot of time has passed with no action, and that when this scheme was eventually released for consultation it was part of the consultation on the bus and bike routes.

We have heard from the WCC team developing both the parking scheme and the bus and bike routes that they have been in discussion with various groups, but as far as we know no local residents have been involved in discussions about the details of the proposed parking scheme. We assume that the Residents' Association would know if these discussions were happening. We have had presentations from the WCC team advising that the scheme was coming, and more recently giving us some information about what is proposed, but this was after decisions had been made about the proposals.

In the time since the Parking Policy was agreed the 'area based planning' could have proceeded. All stakeholders could have been informed of the policy with a letterbox drop to residents and businesses, and opinions about how to implement the policy could have been canvassed. A similar approach is sometimes taken by WCC, for instance the Dog Policy Review last year preceded the development of the Dog Policy currently under consultation.

In practice, the letterbox drop about the Berhampore-Newtown Transport Projects finally happened just before the consultation opened. For many people this was the first time they had heard that changes to parking are coming, and it was presented in conjunction with the proposals for bus and bike routes. Development of such routes is known to be controversial and polarising and we believe that thoughtful consideration of the parking scheme has suffered by joining the two together. Parking was problematic for decades before the bus and bike lanes became an issue, and was going to need intervention with or without the bus and bike issues.

It is also problematic that the scheme was presented as a series of very definite decisions. Submitters using the survey monkey form are asked to support or oppose these proposals and there is little space and no encouragement for alternative ideas. Discussions at the 'drop in sessions' since the consultation started have implied that alternative suggestions about time limits and similar issues would be received sympathetically, and people raising concerns have been advised to make a submission, but the survey form that submitters are asked to use isn't at all welcoming of such submissions. We are not surprised that this implementation of a policy that we regarded as an attempt to mitigate longstanding parking problems has been met with a lot of protest.

We note that on current numbers 52% of submitters are opposed to the scheme, and 42% support it. It's not clear on the website if these are mostly residents or mostly commuters, or others. It is predictable that commuters would oppose it but as only 21% of submitters are identified as working in the area a lot of other

people oppose it as well. We suspect that a lot of the opposition is a reaction to needing to respond at quite short notice to the prospect of major changes, and the lack of opportunity to work through problematic aspects of the scheme and find solutions to them.

What happens next

We assume that WCC are prepared to make changes to the scheme based on feedback from this consultation, as otherwise the consultation would be meaningless. We are not going to ask for specific changes as that is no more inclusive of all residents than the Council making these decisions, but the summaries of submissions on the website and input from our members have noted many issues that need attention. We list a number of these below and a review of submissions will no doubt add more.

The opportunity for a wider conversation before the consultation has been lost, but we believe it is timely to have it now and to give serious consideration to mitigation of the many concerns about the details of the proposals, in discussion with those affected. Ideally this would lead to a revised set of proposals for further feedback before the scheme is presented to the Council.

Issues

P 120 is too restricted. Having 'one size fits all' p120 restrictions across the whole area is too limiting. There have been several suggestions to extend this to p180 in part or the whole of the area. This is more realistic for many activities such as some hospital appointments, sports games, meetings of various sorts, playcentre sessions, and sessions with carers - either for childcare or for the support of elderly or disabled residents.

Having restrictions 8 am – 8 pm Monday to Sunday. Many people are saying this is unnecessarily long, there is little or no evidence that restrictions are generally needed after about 6pm or at the weekend. Removing the restrictions at the weekend gives a lot more freedom for residents to have visitors without worrying about time limits. This would be a topic for area based planning as the need might vary from street to street – the experience of residents in those streets would be valuable information.

Parking for carers. As mentioned above, increasing the time limit to 180 mins would often help with this, but sometimes the care is needed for a longer period. Having an exemption where this need is established would help. This might be equivalent to a 'tradies' permit but the conditions for granting these permits would need to be relaxed.

The eligibility for parking permits.

Off street or on street parking. One issue mentioned several times is the very low priority for residents with off street parking, even when this supposed parking and associated garages are too small to accommodate modern cars. Perhaps a solution for unusable off street parking would be to decommission the kerb crossings, but this needs discussion.

Other submitters query why households without off street parking have much more priority for a second permit than those with off street parking have for a permit at all, when the off street parking might only accommodate one car, and maybe none. The priority considerations for off street parking might vary depending on how many cars can be accommodated. Of course these considerations require case by case review of properties, but this might be necessary for good results.

Restricted numbers of permits per household. This is mentioned several times in relation to large multi generational families, flats with many occupants, and similar situations.

The cost of permits. There is a lot of concern about the up-front cost for people on low incomes.

Linking the permits to number plates. This will work much of the time but there are many potential anomalies. If a permit holder's car is unavailable for a period and they use a different one, perhaps loaned or rented, will a temporary transfer of the permit be easy to organise? What about the situation of a person who is eligible for a permit (and is willing to pay for one) but doesn't currently own a car and uses borrowed or rented cars from time to time or shares a car with a person living in a different zone? No doubt there are other similar scenarios.

Visitor permits. There are questions about why the number of visitor permits for people with off street parking is 25 when those without this can have 50. Often, perhaps usually, the off street parking only accommodates the cars belonging to the household and doesn't help with visitors.

Applying for visitor permits. The process for doing this the day before is cumbersome, and having to know the visitor's licence plate number is an added difficulty. In fact the whole process is particularly difficult for people who have trouble with operating online. Can it be guaranteed that telephone calls to make the application will be answered in a timely fashion seven days a week? The process also is very limiting on spontaneous or short notice visits. Retaining the ability to use physical permits for visitors would help with this.

Monitoring parking by number plate. This is a new policy and the ramifications of it aren't yet clear. Having no physical permits means that people can't keep an eye on parking and know whether or not the parking is legitimate, and the whole responsibility for monitoring and enforcing restrictions falls on the officers. Just how this monitoring will be done isn't clear.

Mobility Parking. There is little mention of this in the parking scheme, but it needs attention and we submit that the number of such parks should be increased, both in the suburban centre and near medical centres, community centres and similar facilities.

Conclusion

The issues identified are a sample of often-expressed concerns, not an exhaustive list. We are asking the Council to take these and other concerns seriously and to engage further with the many stakeholders before the parking scheme is implemented.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Rhona Carson

President

Newtown Residents' Association.