

LESBURY PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

RESULTS OF FOCUS MEETING ON CAR PARKING AT ALNMOUTH RAILWAY STATION

The focus meeting on car parking at Alnmouth railway station, organised by the team involved in the preparation of the Lesbury Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan, was held in Lesbury Village Hall on 21st March, 2018. Local residents gave presentations on their ideas on ways to improve the situation with regard to congestion on the roads leading to the station and the anticipated increase in demand for car parking at the station as a result of planned housing development in the local area, the arrival of the Aln Valley Railway branch line into the station and an increase in tourism.

Approximately 75 people attended the meeting and there was a lively discussion following the presentations. All attendees were invited to complete a voting form which listed some of the suggestions which had been proposed and were asked to provide additional comments and suggestions.

The suggestions put forward in the presentations were –

1. Car parking charges

- a. daily car parking charges
- b. long term parking e.g. up to 5 days
- c. park and ride, with a shuttle bus
- d. Use number plate recognition to monitor car parking charges

2. Residents' car parking scheme

- a. Parking restrictions on all roads approaching the station, with on street parking restricted to residents

3. Additional car parking facilities

- a. Relocate mobile refreshments van onto station platform, thereby providing additional car parking spaces
- b. Coal business relocated and site used for car park
- c. Multi-storey car park following land contours with entrance at Curly Lane level on east side of station
- d. Terraced car park on hillside behind existing car park on west side of station
- e. New access road to railway station, with additional parking spaces provided

A total of 53 voting forms were completed by attendees at the meeting. The results have been analysed according to where people live, in the Hipsburn/Bilton area or the Lesbury village area. Results are presented below –

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SUGGESTION	Hipsburn/Bilton - Completed questionnaires: 29		Lesbury village - Completed questionnaires: 24	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
1. Car parking charges	27	1	20	2
2. Car parking restrictions, e.g. yellow lines	22	4	20	3
3. Car parking permits for residents	23	1	19	2
4. Car parking permits for railway passengers	11	8	8	7
5. Additional car parking places at railway station	27	0	24	0
6. New car park served by diversionary route	12	11	18	6

Comments and/or suggestions made on the voting forms included:

1. Small daily charge for car parking.
2. Free parking for the first 24 hours, then introduce charges.
3. Car parking charges in line with Morpeth (£ 3/day), plus resident parking permit, funded by car parking charges.
4. Increase car park capacity by banning overnight and long term stays.
5. Time limit for parking at station.
6. Car parking charges can only be introduced if Suggestions 2 – 5 on voting form are implemented.
7. Car parking charges, if some of the revenue comes to the parish for development and maintenance work.
8. Perform survey on use of car park at the railway station before introducing car parking charges.
9. Survey of car park users for long term parking.
10. Improve public transport to and from the railway station and organise bus schedules so that buses meet trains.
11. Public transport – use smaller buses.
12. New housing developments should involve bus companies.
13. Promote availability of taxis at station.
14. A new road and a multi-storey car park would solve several problems.
15. A diversionary route is preferable. However, associated housing developments must be small and in keeping with local area.
16. The multi-storey solution would work well.
17. Promote car sharing.
18. Consider needs of pedestrians, especially those with a heavy suitcase to pull, whose progress along pavement is impeded by cars parked on the pavement.
19. Restrict road access to proposed new road and pedestrian access via Curly Lane.
20. Look at ways of reducing demand for parking at the station.

Note: Suggestion No. 4 - car parking permits for railway passengers was not specifically discussed in the presentations. This explains the low response rate for this suggestion.

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Following the meeting, further suggestions/comments have been sent by email. Ideas not already covered in the list above include –

1. An app based system for flexible car sharing and minibus schemes which could be sharing of privately owned vehicles and/or run through licensed minicab providers.
2. Improve access to the station for cyclists and pedestrians. Cycle use will increase if there are safe routes and it would reduce car use and pressure on parking. The Aln Valley Railway are planning a cycle route from the railway station to Alnwick along the old branch line rail route, but the earliest date for this is 2021.

RESULTS

Analysing the results from the voting forms, there was overwhelming support for additional car parking spaces at the railway station (96%) and for the introduction of car parking charges (89%), restrictions on car parking on the roads around the station (79%) and car parking permits for residents (79%). The idea of a new access road to the railway station, with additional parking spaces provided was supported by 57% of the people who completed a voting form. However, the positive response rate from people living closer to the station, i.e. in Hipsburn or Bilton, was 52% compared with a positive response rate of 75% from people living further away from the station, i.e. in Lesbury village.

All three ideas for additional car parking facilities at the station (covered by suggestion no. 5) - coal business relocated and site used for car park, multi-storey car park following land contours with entrance at Curly Lane level on east side of station and a terraced car park on the hillside behind the existing car park on the west side of station, were supported in the comments received as was the idea of a new access road to the railway station, with additional parking spaces provided (suggestion no. 6).

A combination of free car parking at the station for the first 24 hours, with the introduction of charges for longer stays, combined with parking restrictions on all roads approaching the station and on street parking restricted to residents, were the most frequent comments received. Suggested ways to reduce pressure on car parking space at the railway station were to improve the provision of public transport to and from the station, improve cycle and pedestrian access to the station, promote car sharing and availability of taxis at the station as well as banning overnight and long stay car parking.

ADDITIONAL VOTING FORMS

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An additional 14 forms were submitted by people living on Curly Lane, South View and Lesbury Road who did not attend the meeting on 21st March. The forms were distributed by Billy McKnight, one of the people who presented at the meeting. The results are presented below -

SUGGESTION	Completed questionnaires: 14	
	YES	NO
7. Car parking charges	1	11
8. Car parking restrictions, e.g. yellow lines	6	7
9. Car parking permits for residents	4	8
10. Car parking permits for railway passengers	0	8
11. Additional car parking places at railway station	10	3
12. New car park served by diversionary route	10	2

Comparison of the results from people who did attend the meeting and those who did not shows -

- 1) people who did attend the meeting were in favour of the introduction of car parking charges (47 for/3 against), car parking restrictions on the roads around the station (42 for/7 against) and car parking permits for residents (42 for/ 3 against) whereas people who submitted forms but were not present at the meeting were against the introduction of car parking charges (1 for/11 against), car parking restrictions (6 for/7 against) and car parking permits for residents (4 for/8 against).
- 2) The need for additional car parking places at the railway station was supported by both the people who attended the meeting and those who subsequently submitted voting forms.
- 3) The idea of a new access road to the railway station, with additional parking spaces provided was supported by 10/12 (83%) respondents who did not attend the meeting compared with 12/23 (52%) respondents from the Hipsburn/Bilton area and 18/24 (75%) respondents from the Lesbury Village area who did attend the meeting.

It should be mentioned that the respondents from Curly Lane and South View (and Lesbury Road) who did not attend the meeting live in the area closest to the railway station. This is the area which will be most affected by the introduction of car parking charges, restrictions on car parking on the roads around the station and car parking permits for residents.