

**Response from Transition Tavistock, 10<sup>th</sup> Sept 2020**



**Introduction**

The stated reason for Abbey Car Park reverting from long to short term parking is “to support the town by providing an increased turnover of vehicles”, but the consultation page does not give or reference any expansion of this. The report presented to the July meeting of the Council (which we eventually found) refers to stakeholder consultation and an earlier (unpublished?) parking survey, but with no detail cited. It is not clear whether the problem is that the car park is currently filled by vehicles staying a full day, or that spaces are available but not taken due to the tariff.

We recognise the importance of enabling Tavistock town centre to have viable shops and be an attractive place for community activities and we promote these aims as a volunteer run community group. However, we are concerned that “increased turnover of vehicles” is seen as automatically beneficial, without supporting estimates of either the positive impact expected or of unintended negative impact.

The Council’s wider policies include encouraging residents to reduce their carbon footprint and to use active travel. We fully support those aims, so comment below on how this proposal fits them.

To have a positive impact on town centre shops, without increasing traffic levels in the area overall, the proposed change should encourage people driving through Tavistock for another reason to stop and visit the centre, and local residents who shop by car to replace a trip out of town or to a supermarket with one to the town centre. It may have this effect, but with no information presented on current shopping habits and willingness to change, the impact is uncertain. Moreover, the availability of a 30 minute parking slot could lead to “quick dash” shopping stops, discouraging fuller exploration of Tavistock’s offer.

Negative impacts are likely, both through encouraging additional car journeys and through discouraging pedestrians and cyclists. We are therefore surprised that the report to Council does not consider the traffic impact in any way, and states there will be no impact on biodiversity or climate change. The report to Council says that that implementation will be monitored, but does not say what will be looked at.

While only a short distance from the shopping streets, Abbey Car Park is separated from them by a busy junction and bridge. Increased turnover in the car park will increase the number of vehicles there. Abbey Bridge is already problematic for cyclists using NCN27 as there is no safe way for them to cross it. People walking from the car park into town encounter and add to the difficulty of passing safely on the bridge pavement. It is barely wide enough for 1 m distanced passing even without shopping bags or pushchairs, and stepping off into the road is extremely risky. Given this, we think the offer of a 30 minute parking tariff is unwise. It leaves barely 20 minutes shopping time on the town side of the bridge – unlikely to see significant spending, and tempting people to push past others while rushing back. Apart from the current health risks, this spoils the town centre experience which the Council aims to promote.

Cars reaching the car park via Whitchurch Road either come via the dangerous Pixon Lane junction or along the full residential length of the road, which is already hazardous for cyclists. The turn in to the car park is across a pavement which is well used, being the natural walking route from major residential areas and to St Peter’s School. Our members using this route recall nuisance when the car

park was previously short term, because cars turning out have to block the whole pavement while waiting for a gap in traffic, and some drivers fail to look for pedestrians.

The report did not offer evidence as to whether other long stay sites can cater for current long stay users of the car park. Measures are also required to reduce the need for people working in Tavistock to arrive by car. If income from Abbey Car Park does increase with short term use we would like to see that used to mitigate negative impacts, for example by providing under-cover secure cycle parking suitable for people working in the town centre.

It is disappointing that the parking survey did not cover other modes of transport – or even cycle parking. We urge the Council to recognise that its aim of promoting sustainable transport as should be taken into account in all decisions, and affect the framing of all relevant consultations.

We **object** to the proposal as it currently stands, as we think 30 minute option in the tariff undermines the stated aim and is unsafe in this location.

Our **response** on the proposal overall is neutral given the lack of evidence, but we ask that the Council:

- Includes increased traffic and impact on pedestrians in its monitoring of the changes.
- In future surveys and consultations on parking related matters always includes an invitation for people to say what would help them reach their destination without using a car.
- In all formal consultations, includes a direct link to the relevant Council meetings and reports at which evidence for the proposal was presented.
- Includes community groups working for sustainable travel among the stakeholders consulted on draft proposals with traffic or transport implications.

Submitted by Transition Tavistock, [www.transitiontavistock.org.uk](http://www.transitiontavistock.org.uk)

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