

TEDDINGTON SOCIETY ROADS & TRANSPORT GROUP AGM REPORT 2008 - CONTROLLED PARKING ZONE CONSULTATION PROBLEMS DOMINATE YEAR

1. BACKGROUND - SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND CPZ VOTING

1.1 Meeting at Landmark Centre 23rd March 2001

Over 200 residents attend Teddington Town Centre Improvement Study Meeting at the Landmark Centre, controlled parking one of seven agenda items discussed. Some 45 residents volunteered to work with Councillors and Officers to identify safety and environmental issues requiring improvement. It became very clear during discussions about CPZs, that the almost unanimous view was that Teddington did not want or need CPZs, and that CPZs would reduce the friendly ambience of Teddington as a place to live, work, or shop. The support for CPZs in Teddington as a whole was estimated to be significantly less than 6%, and subsequent consultations indicate that figure to be about right.

MAY 2002 CONSERVATIVES COME TO POWER (correction)

1.2 Parking Review by Teddington Residents – May to November 2002

Teddington Town Centre Study Residents' Parking sub-Committee was set up on 23rd May 2002 to carry out parking review – 13 residents (including three TeddSoc members) volunteered to work with a Councillor and Officers. The Officers pressed for an immediate whole Teddington CPZ consultation. This was rejected by residents who preferred to identify where parking problems occurred, and find more appropriate solutions. The High Street selected for priority action as shopping areas were being used as residents', and car dealer parking - Pay & Display parking was successfully introduced in September 2002.

1.3 November 2002 – Parking Report completed

Residents' Parking Report completed, making 31 recommendations covering all aspects of parking and transport. Members found no evidence of the widespread support for CPZs that local Councillors had identified from their postbags. The Report recommended that residents in just two small areas, one either side of the station, be consulted on three options:-

- (i) No change
- (ii) Free turnover parking, including reduction in yellow lining to create extra parking spaces
- (iii) Two hour CPZ

1.4 Meeting between Parking Team, Councillors and Officers on 12th December 2002

The Report was discussed in detail with two Councillors and three officers. In spite of the Report's proposals for just two small consultation areas, Councillors and Officers still wanted to consult everyone in the original consultation area, plus another small area to the north, but did agree that all three options should be offered to residents. The team disagreed with this wider consultation, saying that the Report should be presented to the main Study working party, and if adopted, its recommendations be presented to all residents, prior to formal consultation on the three options.

Unfortunately, the consultation did not take place in either area before the local elections – had it done so, well over £100,000 would have been saved, and the parking situation would have been sorted out over five years ago. The area currently being proposed as a CPZ is almost exactly the same as that recommended in the 2002 Residents' Report as a viable consultation area. The Residents' Parking Report remains the basis of almost all of Teddington Society's transport and parking policies.

1.5 May 2003 – Conservatives introduce minimum voting criteria (correction)

Town Centre Study suspended, funding withdrawn, but items in progress completed, Broad Street, Causeway, Church Road area improvements put on hold. New minimum voting criteria introduced for CPZs to avoid CPZs being introduced on the basis of minority a vote, and specifically to prevent unnecessary vehicle displacement into adjacent areas. Round One, 30% "YES" vote required to progress to round two. Round Two, 33% "YES" vote required to introduce CPZ, provided that in each case, the "YES" vote is the majority vote.

1.6 February to May 2004 – 28.4% of votes not recorded in results Annexe

First CPZ consultation over a very wide area – no pre-consultation with residents, businesses or groups – but the "blackmail" question 2 not asked. The consultation took place at the same time as TeddSoc was campaigning to save a North Lane car park. Some 5875 households were consulted, estimated

figures - 510 voted "YES" (8.7%), 1440 voted "NO" (24.5%) and 3925 (66.8%) either undecided or did not vote (unknown to all Transport Consultative Group Members and members of the public, 28.4% of votes were excluded from analysed results). CPZ could have been rejected as 30% plus majority criteria not met - but exceptionally, approval for second round consultation was agreed by Councillor Mark Kreling at the May 2004 TCG meeting.

1.7 February to May 2005

Second CPZ consultation over a smaller area. Some 2560 households consulted, 383 vote "YES"(15%), 423 vote "NO"(16.5%), and 1754 (68.5%) either undecided or did not vote. The CPZ voting minimum voting criteria were again not met – but Councillor Mark Kreling approved a yellow line reduction and safety corner marking review based on Residents' Parking Report recommendations, aimed at improving the parking situation around the station by creating more parking spaces.

1.8 "Walkabout" 24th August 2005

Councillor James Mumford led "Walkabout" team (Mick Potter, Yunesh Padayachi and me) to identify where yellow lines can be removed to create over 50 free turnover parking spaces for residents, and corners where short yellow lines were required to give pedestrian access. Agreed plans were advertised in local press and residents were consulted in November 2005 - for reasons unknown, these proposals were not implemented. Had they been, there was a reasonable possibility that a CPZ would not be necessary either side of the station.

1.9 May 2006 – Liberal Democrats come to power – major change to CPZ policies

New Cabinet Member for Transport, Councillor David Trigg appointed. It appears that almost immediately, in order to increase the number of CPZs, a policy decision was made to remove minimum voting criteria because residents across the borough simply weren't bothering to vote, let alone to turn out to vote for CPZs. A plan for widespread introduction of CPZs has subsequently turned out to be a key tool in implementing a new policy of differential taxation of vehicles regarded as "gas guzzlers" – which gained considerable positive publicity in the national press. In reality, the additional taxation did not catch all such vehicles – just those that could not be parked off-road in controlled parking areas during hours of operation.

1.10 – Cabinet approves new CPZ procedures 17th July 2006

A new policy was introduced, under which not only were the Conservative's minimum voting criteria removed, but extremely worryingly, Councillor Trigg stated that all future decisions were to be made on subjective criteria, rather than the objective criteria that had always been used in the past. The Teddington Society R&T Group strongly opposed this as he was being given virtually unlimited powers, with the risk of abuse of power, if not used with great care, commonsense, and recognition of the rights and wishes of all members of the local community.

I addressed the Cabinet Meeting, to lodge Teddington Society's objections to the removal of minimum voting criteria and pointed out to Cabinet Members that :-

"In proposing that the qualifying percentage criteria be scrapped, the Council is effectively saying to residents "OK, as you won't vote, we will scrap the percentage criteria, but even if you do vote, we are not necessarily going to take any notice of your vote". This is not the way ahead, we believe that small CPZs can be designed to minimise displacement, this would give confidence to local residents, who can be persuaded to vote. Please keep the qualifying criteria for the present".

Unfortunately, for residents right across the borough, this request was rejected.

1.11 Area Consultation Meeting 2nd April 2007 – request for pre-CPZ consultation

The new CPZ policy envisages pre-consultation meetings with local residents' organisations, community groups and businesses to encourage participation, and recommends a public meeting to announce the Study, obtain initial views, and to invite representation. Therefore, at the 2nd April Hampton Wick and Teddington Area Consultation Meeting, a request was made for Residents' Parking sub-Committee and TeddSoc R&T Group members, and local businesses, to be consulted prior to the preparation of CPZ consultation documents to avoid the problems that had occurred during previous consultations. This appeared to have been agreed by local Councillors, but did not happen – which was a pity, as many of the problems we have recently faced, could easily have been sorted out at the various pre-meetings.

1.12 "One – Stage" CPZ consultation for Teddington, with no public meeting

In spite of major roadworks involving closure of several roads around the station, local residents received CPZ voting papers, with a closure date of 15th June – a delay was requested but not granted. On Saturday 2nd June, a CPZ exhibition was held in Teddington library, displaying a map of Teddington marked up with hundreds of parking spaces, dozens of meter and parking sign locations, in almost every road between Udney Park Road and Coleshill Road – all before a single vote had been cast. The plans angered residents so much that officers removed them by the following Wednesday. There have been various explanations as to why the plan was produced, mainly claiming it “was a mistake” by a new member of staff – but it may have been produced to try and persuade local residents to vote for a CPZ in this large area. In the event, 2085 households were consulted, 354 voted “YES” (17%), 600 voted “NO” (28.8%), and 1131 (54.2%) either had no view or did not vote.

1.13 Transport Consultative Group meeting 24th July 2007 not advertised, hall not booked, incorrect voting figures circulated, very low turnout of residents

Although there was a brief mention in the small print of the consultation document that a meeting would be held at the Baptist Church, it did not mention the time, details of the meeting were not included on the notice of council meetings on the Broad Street noticeboard, or advertised in the local press. I did tell Councillors Trigg and Mumford and council officers Smith and Skews on 12th July that the TCG meeting had not been advertised, and again in writing on 22nd July. In the late afternoon of 23rd July, I circulated a number of residents on the TeddSoc consultation/information email list to remind them about the TCG meeting. Had I not done so, the TCG would not have taken place as the hall had not been booked. TeddSoc member, Colin Hicks, on receipt of the email realised that the hall had not been booked, and arranged for the council to be contacted to confirm that the meeting was to take place. It was, so an emergency booking was made.

About 20 residents turned up to the meeting, rather than the expected 150-200, at the time we thought it may have been due to the meeting being held in the school holidays (the library “exhibition” was held in half term). Incorrect voting figures were produced, and only one Councillor on the TCG had made any effort to find out anything about Teddington. The officers had not made any recommendations for Councillor Trigg to approve or reject, all in all, a far from satisfactory situation. Just how unsatisfactory did not emerge until Colin Hicks told me that the meeting had not been booked until the church contacted council officers early in the morning of the 24th.

1.14 Was the TCG meeting legal?

I will not bore you with the details of the protracted correspondence that passed between me, Mrs Gillian Norton, RuT Chief Executive, and various officers. Our view was that the meeting was not legal and should have been re-run, their view was that it was legal as the minimum legal requirement of lodging an agenda in the library and putting the meeting (with no mention of Teddington) on the council’s calendar of meetings on its website. Councillor Martin Seymour, Shadow Cabinet Member for Transport did try to get the decision called-in, but this was refused by the Scrutiny Committee Chairman, Councillor Mumford.

1.15 Waldegrave Road added without debate

There was no mention of Waldegrave Road at the 24th July TCG meeting, which was not surprising, as it is 400 metres from the station and does not suffer from rail commuter parking. It came as a complete surprise to find Waldegrave Road added to the station road area as part of the same proposed CPZ. In the December consultation, 82 residents were consulted, 29 replied (35.4%), 8 voted “YES” (9.7%), 19 voted “NO” (23.3%) and 55 (67%) either had No View or did not vote. Having been soundly rejected, a reduced section of Waldegrave Road was selected for a CPZ using the same voting figures, the cut off point now included 58 properties, with the same 8 votes being used (13.8%) to justify inclusion.

We believe that the real reason for Waldegrave Road’s inclusion is nothing at all to do with parking problems, but all to do with the Richmond Housing Partnership’s planning application for the Paint Laboratory site. If a CPZ is in place, onsite parking spaces in the worst case scenario, can be reduced to NIL, and any residents or staff housed or working in the new buildings can be refused parking permits. The function of a CPZ is to address parking problems, not to create them by taking almost 40 parking spaces out of circulation for two hours a day, and prevent adequate onsite parking arrangements for residents and workers being made. Inadequate off-road parking provision for new developments reduces the quality of life for all residents in the area.

1.16 December 2007 – second CPZ consultation – incorrect voting figures circulated again

This time, at our request, steps were taken to advertise the 30th January TCG meeting, and just before the meeting took place, posters were put on lampposts around the station. The majority of speakers at

the TCG were anti-CPZ, although most recognised that a tightly drawn CPZ, including just house frontages, and excluding community parking spaces (those not outside houses) in the roads around the station, could be put in place without creating significant displacement. Unfortunately, the design produced and displayed in the library showed conversion of almost all community spaces into residents' spaces. Residents already had ample provision and this allocation was clearly designed to maximise displacement as has happened in North Road, Kew.

Corrected voting figures were circulated at the meeting, and even they have been the subject of further revision.

As residents have found out more about CPZs, the less they feel inclined to vote for them. In this latest consultation over an area selected as a potential CPZ by Councillor Trigg, 1120 households were consulted, 197 voted "YES" (17.58%), 330 voted "NO" (29.46%) which equate to 67% more "NO" votes than "YES" votes, and a staggering 593 residents (52.95%) either had NO View or did not vote.

Councillor Trigg, as usual, did not make a decision at the meeting, but eventually decided that seven roads and four part roads should be in the CPZ. We believe that the seven roads that voted "YES" should be in a CPZ, and have challenged the inclusion of four part roads as the YES votes appear to be in a minority, pending confirmation of the accuracy of the figures produced.

1.17 The proposed CPZ area – only 44.1% of residents vote

(i) The seven roads with a majority vote:- Adelaide Road -10 houses (7 YES, 0 NO, 1 undecided); Albert Road - 27 houses (11 YES, 2 NO); Bridgeman Road – 35 houses (7 YES, 5 NO); Cedar Road - 36 houses (12 YES, 11 NO); Christchurch Avenue – 13 houses (4 YES, 3 NO); Station Road - 41 houses (12 YES, 6 NO, 1 undecided); Victoria Road/Old Station Gardens – 36 houses (17 YES, 7 NO).

TOTALS:- 198 houses, 70 YES, 34 NO, 2 undecided, did not vote 92

(ii) The four part roads with either no majority or a disputed majority obtained by manipulation of boundaries:- Clarence Road – 33 houses (numbers 1-41 & 2-36) (9 YES, 13 NO, 1 undecided); High Street – 2 houses (numbers 2&3) (No votes); Park Road – 113 houses (numbers 1-87 & 2-30) (17 YES, 16 NO, 3 undecided), Waldegrave Road (modified area) – 58 houses (numbers 1-69 & 2-8), (8 YES, 3 NO, 2 undecided).

TOTALS:- 206 houses, 34 YES, 32 NO, 6 undecided, did not vote 134.

2. Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting 28th February 2008 – refusal to publicise the meeting

Councillor Martin Seymour called in the latest TCG decision on the grounds of lack of transparency, and the various errors and problems that had occurred in the consultation process in both consultations. I requested that the meeting should be publicised in the same way as the last TCG had been, but was met with a point blank refusal, on the grounds that a notice had been put in the noticeboard in Broad Street, an agenda had been put in the library, and the meeting appeared on the calendar of meetings on the council website. As a result, only a small number of anti-CPZ residents knew about the meeting, but large numbers of pro-CPZ residents had been told about the meeting. The result was that instead of scrutinising what went wrong with the two consultations, pro-CPZ residents from roads that voted "NO" were able to ask for reconsideration of their roads. I will cover this in more detail in Tidings.

3. Proposed loss of 120 residents' parking spaces in Fairfax and Cromwell Roads

Two Collis School parents who live close to the school made complaints about other parents, grandparents and carers who brought children to school by car, alleging that many stopped in the school entrance safety zones, or parked on corners creating difficulties in crossing the roads safely. This may well have happened when the Collis School re-build was taking place, but we carried out a series of observations and found little evidence that this was still happening. We discovered, purely by chance, that as a result of this complaint, enlarged safety zones were to be put by each entrance, which was acceptable, and that 120 residents parking spaces were to be removed in Cromwell and Fairfax Roads. This was raised at the November Area Consultation meeting, and at the 30th January TCG – the entrance safety zones will go ahead, a working party is to be set up to review the residents' parking space proposals. The Society will be opposing the unnecessary loss of these 120 spaces, and making proposals for a small amount of half pavement parking at drop-off and pick-up times to ensure that fire engines etc. will have clear access at all times.

4. Other issues for coverage in Tidings

I will be covering the problems with revised bus stop layouts, the announcement of an area travel plan for Teddington, and the problems created by the lack of consultation when consultants are employed by the council.

Brian Holder, 11th April 2008