

Division: Witney West

DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL– 14 FEBRUARY 2013

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO PARKING RESTRICTIONS HIGH STREET AND CHURCH GREEN, WITNEY

**Report by Deputy Director for Environment & Economy
(Commercial)**

Introduction

1. This report considers objections to a formal consultation on two separate proposals to amend parking restrictions in Witney.

Background

2. Following discussions at the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee (TAC) in late 2011 about delays to traffic (particularly buses) in Witney Town Centre proposals were advertised, as part of a package of other changes in West Oxfordshire, to extend the “prohibition of loading/unloading” restriction on the west side of High Street (near the raised pedestrian crossing point). No objections were received to this specific proposal. However, as there were objections to some of the other proposed changes elsewhere in the District, they were reported to the then Cabinet Member for Transport’s Delegated Decisions Meeting in February 2012. The works to implement the changes along High Street were carried out in late July 2012 and the Order became enforceable a few weeks later.
3. The introduction of the loading ban resulted in a number of complaints from disabled people and groups representing them, as well as coverage in the local press. In response, officers met with some of the complainants on site and subsequently presented a report to the October meeting of the TAC putting forward a range of options to address the concerns. Following the meeting and subsequent discussions between officers of the County Council and West Oxfordshire District Council (who are considering changes to taxi ranks in the centre of Witney), proposals were advertised to create specific disabled ‘blue badge’ parking bays on the opposite side of High Street and also on an adjacent section of Market Square, whilst retaining the loading ban introduced in summer 2012. The current and proposed layouts are shown on the plan at Annex 1. A plan detailing location is shown at Annex 2.
4. Separately, and in response to on-going requests from residents of Oakfield Place regarding the problems exiting onto Church Green as a result of parked vehicles obscuring vision, a proposal to remove a single 2-hour parking place on Church Green in the vicinity of The Fleece Hotel was advertised (Annex 3).

Formal Consultation

5. Oxfordshire County Council sent a copy of the draft amendment orders, statement of reasons and a copy of the public notice appearing in the local press, containing the proposed changes, to formal consultees on 15 November 2012. These documents, together with supporting documentation and plans were deposited for public inspection at County Hall, West Oxfordshire District Council Town Centre Shop in Witney and at Carterton library. They are also available for inspection in the Members' Resource Centre.
6. At the same time, the Council wrote to local residents and businesses affected by the proposed restrictions asking for their comments. In addition public notices were displayed at each site and in the Witney Gazette and Oxford Times. Other changes to parking restrictions in West Oxfordshire were advertised at the same time – responses to these are dealt with in other reports to this meeting.
7. A total of 18 responses were received, 8 regarding the proposals for High Street and 10 regarding Church Green. These are summarised at Annex 4.

High Street

8. Strong objections have been raised by a small number of people who are either Blue Badge holders or who are responding on behalf of the disabled. They consider that the removal of the parking facility on the west side of High Street has had a major detrimental effect on their lives and should be reinstated. They do not consider the alternative provision of specific Blue Badge bays on the opposite side of High Street and on Market Square to be acceptable, due to the camber of the footway and the number of pedestrians. Support for the proposals has come from local Councillors and an adjacent business.
9. In response, it should be noted that the previous provision was simply the exemption Blue Badge holders have from double yellow line restrictions and as such was not an exclusive facility but rather one that could legally be used by other vehicles including those loading/unloading. Since the loading ban was introduced, Blue Badge holders have been observed using the bay which is now proposed to become exclusively disabled parking, as well as nearby stretches with double yellow lines.
10. Separately, several objectors have complained about the way in which the consultation on the 2011 proposals was carried out and about minor administrative errors in the 2012 consultation which resulted in a 2 day delay in documents being available at the Town Centre Shop. Additional time was allowed for objections to be received and members of the public who raised

this issue were advised accordingly. These have been dealt with through the Council's procedures and staff have apologised.

11. Concerns about parking by taxis and proposals for new ranks are a matter for West Oxfordshire District Council.
12. The proposals are considered to represent a balanced approach to the management of traffic and parking in this part of Witney and whilst they do not restore the facility previously available to Blue Badge holders, they do create reserved parking places for the disabled wanting to visit the area.

Church Green

13. The objection from the Witney Hotel raises concerns about the overall parking availability in this part of the town centre and therefore the importance of every space and also the possibility that other similar spaces will be withdrawn in the future. These points have been carefully considered but this has to be balanced with the problems reported about egress from Oakfield Place. Opportunities to create additional short-term parking in the Church Green area will be pursued when resources allow.

Financial and Staff Implications (including Revenue)

14. The cost of the works described in this report will be met from the budget for minor traffic scheme maintenance.

RECOMMENDATION

15. **The Deputy Leader of the Council is RECOMMENDED to approve the parking restrictions as set out in this report and advertised as part of the Oxfordshire County Council (Various Roads - West Oxfordshire) (Prohibition and Restriction of Waiting and Permitted Parking) (Variation No.1) Order 20****

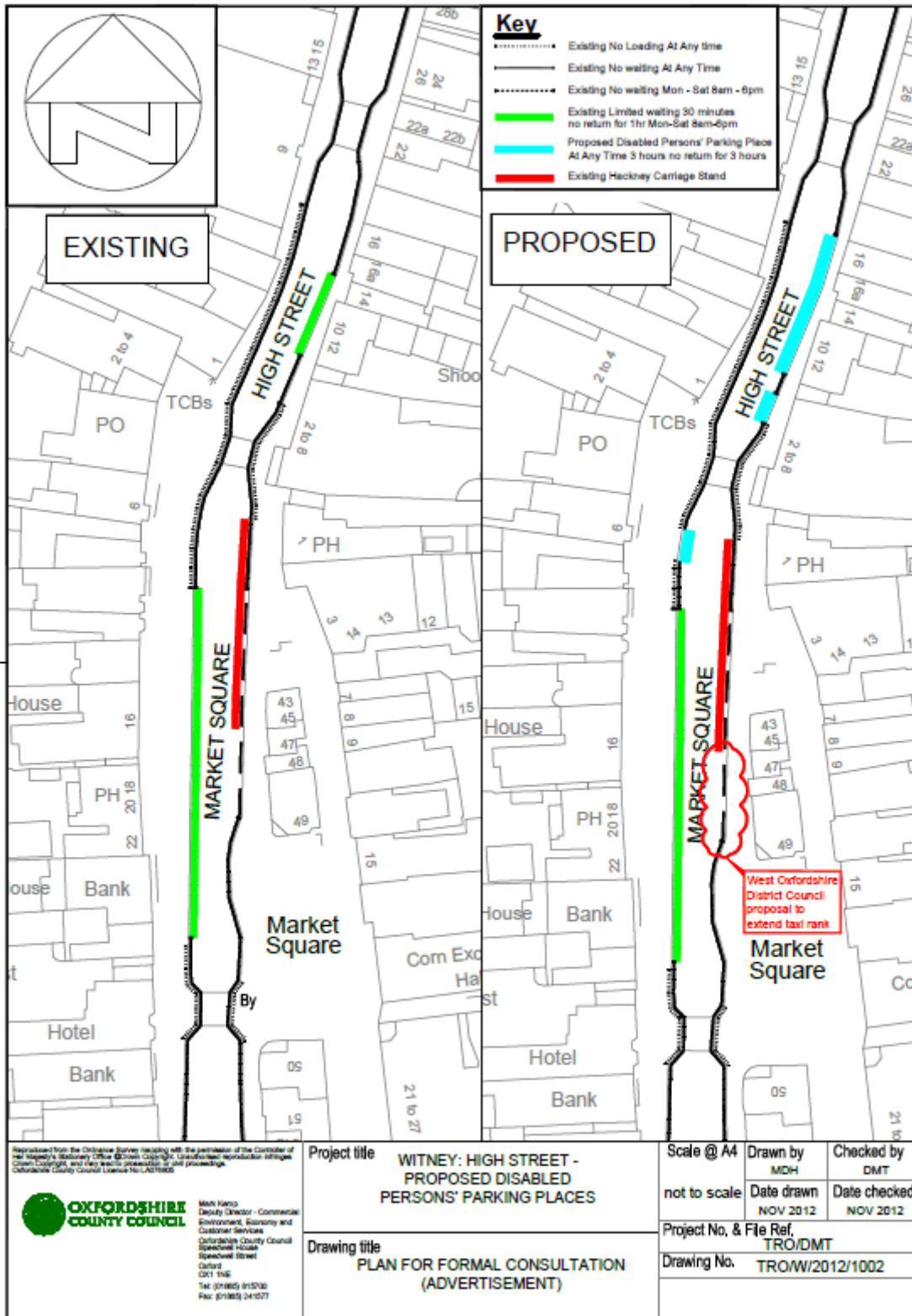
MARK KEMP

Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Commercial)

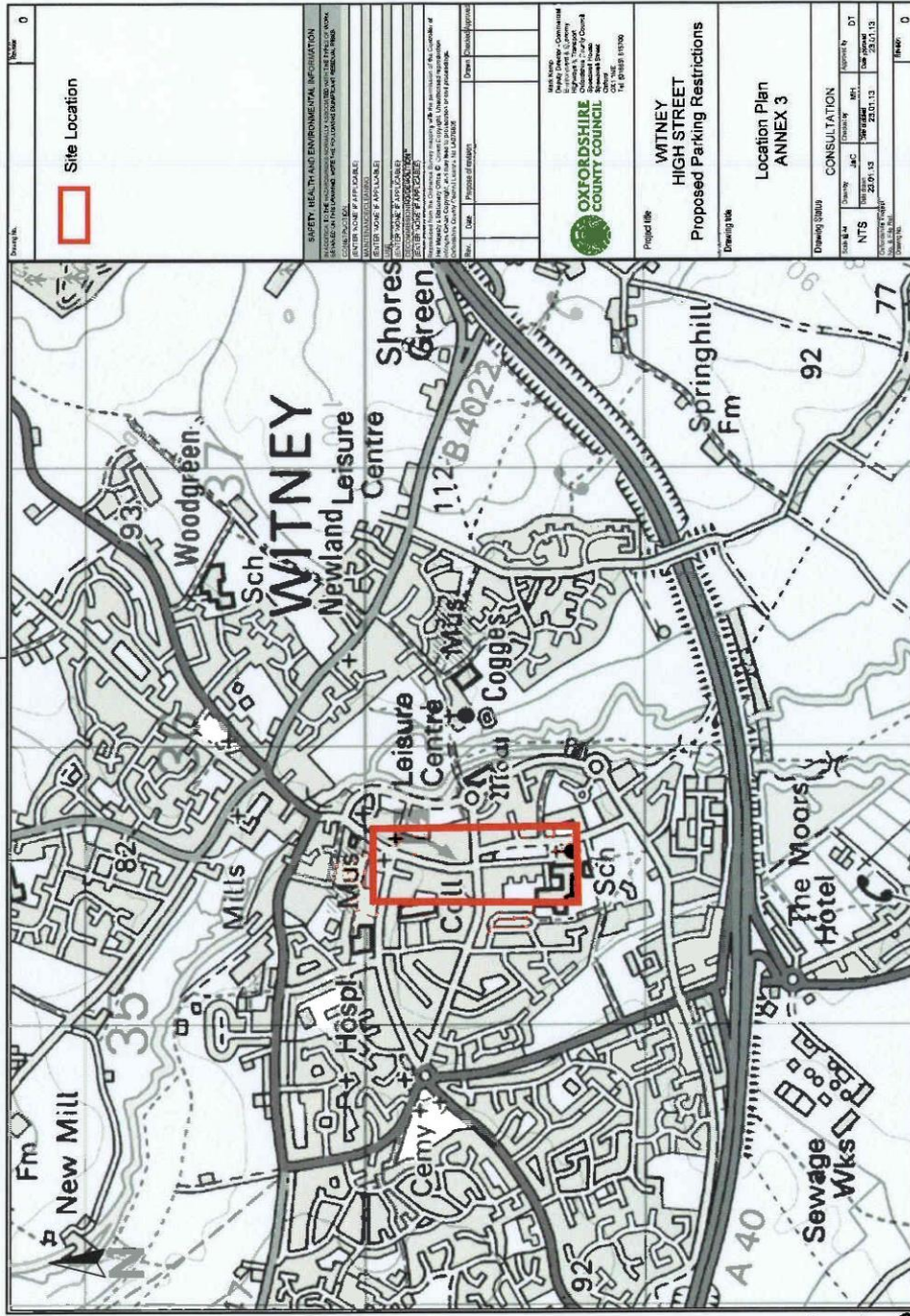
Background papers: Consultation documentation

Contact Officers: Jim Daughton 01865 815803

January 2013



ANNEX 2



Site Location



SAFETY HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATION

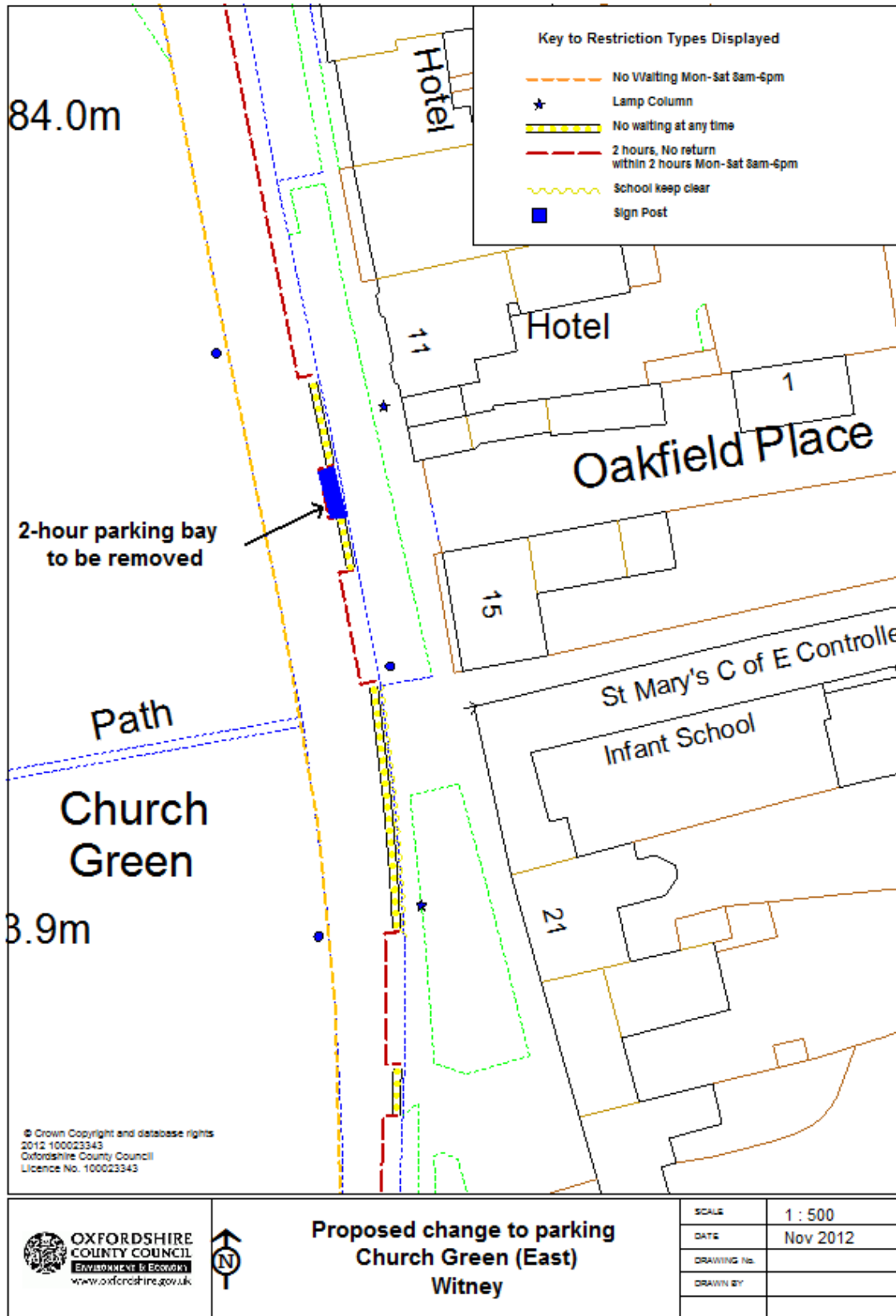
NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION	STATUS
1	11/08/13	PROPOSED	PROPOSED
2	11/08/13	PROPOSED	PROPOSED
3	11/08/13	PROPOSED	PROPOSED
4	11/08/13	PROPOSED	PROPOSED
5	11/08/13	PROPOSED	PROPOSED
6	11/08/13	PROPOSED	PROPOSED
7	11/08/13	PROPOSED	PROPOSED
8	11/08/13	PROPOSED	PROPOSED
9	11/08/13	PROPOSED	PROPOSED
10	11/08/13	PROPOSED	PROPOSED

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
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Project title: **WITNEY HIGH STREET Proposed Parking Restrictions**

Drawing title: **Location Plan ANNEX 3**

NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION	STATUS
1	11/08/13	PROPOSED	PROPOSED
2	11/08/13	PROPOSED	PROPOSED
3	11/08/13	PROPOSED	PROPOSED
4	11/08/13	PROPOSED	PROPOSED
5	11/08/13	PROPOSED	PROPOSED
6	11/08/13	PROPOSED	PROPOSED
7	11/08/13	PROPOSED	PROPOSED
8	11/08/13	PROPOSED	PROPOSED
9	11/08/13	PROPOSED	PROPOSED
10	11/08/13	PROPOSED	PROPOSED



RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

RESPONDENT	COMMENT	RESPONSE
Councillor Colin Dingwall WODC	I am sure those disadvantaged by previous proposals will be delighted. The reinstatement of disabled parking in this area is essential to those who need it. My only concern is to point out that they would have preferred to park on the West of the High Street because of the wider pavement facilitating easier transfer from vehicle to wheelchair without disrupting pedestrian flows.	Noted
Councillor Andrew Coles WODC	These proposals seem good to me and I believe meet the needs of a number of affected parties: 1) West side of High Street kept clear to avoid traffic congestion caused by parking on both sides of the road. 2) Extra specific disabled parking areas on the east side (although I think they would have preferred the west side). 3) Extra spaces for taxis (although I imagine some might complain as they'll now no longer be able to park on the double yellow lines where new disabled spaces will be).	Noted
Business owner High Street	I agree to the proposed disabled parking outside our premises, but feel you are wasting your time as the problem will still remain with the taxis using these spaces as a place to park while they wait for a parking place in the taxi rank, even though you are adding another 3 places to the rank. On most days of the week you will find most of the spaces taken up by taxis along with more taxis waiting further down the High Street all waiting for a space in the rank. Maybe one long term plan would be to close the High Street between numbers 28 and 22 and make it an area free for pedestrians leaving the remaining area of the High Street up to the roundabout and Market Square free for disabled parking and vans and lorries to unload.	Noted

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<p>Resident of Charlbury</p>	<p>Thank you for sending me the notices about the proposed changes to parking in Witney High Street. I was amazed to read in today's Witney Gazette that you had rescinded the no waiting or unloading on the western side as well as introducing what seem to be very unsatisfactory alternatives. Could you enlighten me as to the correct situation, please?</p>	<p>This has been clarified.</p>
<p>Resident of Milton-u-Wychwood</p>	<p>These proposals do not meet the needs of Blue Badge holders. The parking needs to be back on the west side where it was safe and convenient. The proposed one space on the post office side is not suitable; it has part of a wall in the way, a deep drain cover in the road, and various poles and posts to be negotiated.</p> <p>Also the proposed taxi rank near the Congregational church would be a serious problem for disabled people using the churches and the WODC shop. I really feel this is discrimination against disabled people. I do not understand how the original decision was made with no warning or consultation, and yet there seems to be notices and meetings galore in order to try and fix the problem.</p> <p>Those concerned are only asking for blue badge parking to be restored to its original positions. This was taken away with no consultation or warning, and we are unable to find out who originated this action.</p> <p>It is quite unfair to disabled people, who have enough problems to contend with. I suggest that if congestion of the street is really a problem, there is no reason at all why us able-bodied people should need to park in the High Street – there is lots of free parking in Witney</p>	<p>The parking on the west side of High Street was removed to assist the flow of traffic. The previous provision was simply the exemption Blue Badge holders have from double yellow line restrictions and as such was not an exclusive facility but rather one that could legally be used by other vehicles including those loading/unloading.</p> <p>The issue of more radical approaches to parking and traffic management in Witney Town Centre is beyond the scope of this consultation</p>

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<p>Resident of Lower Heyford</p>	<p>I am writing to protest about the changes to parking opportunities for disabled people in the centre of Witney. Without due consultation with Blue Badge Holders in West Oxfordshire the facility to use the badge was suddenly removed from them to park on the West Side of Witney High Street, when loading restriction signs suddenly appeared.</p> <p>It appears that the whole process has been handled very badly and disabled people who battle every day to stay independent have been put in a state of unnecessary anxiety.</p> <p>There are many reasons why the west side of the High Street is the only safe parking for Blue Badge holders. These include the condition and width of the pavement, the absence of hazards such as posts and broken kerbs and the amount of space for 8 vehicles. There is also a need for access to the Post Office.</p> <p>Under the current conditions, there are too few spaces offered where the pavement is narrow and liable to be blocked when disabled people are alighting and putting both them and other pedestrians at risk. The camber of the pavement is wrong/dangerous and the kerb curved. The space further down is at risk of being damaged by buses turning into the High Street from Welch Way.</p>	<p>Issues regarding the consultation process for the 2011 proposals have been dealt with through the Council's procedures</p> <p>The proposals are considered to represent a balanced approach to the management of traffic and parking in this part of Witney and, whilst they do not restore the facility previously available to Blue Badge holders they do create reserved parking places for the disabled wanting to visit the area.</p>
<p>Resident of Witney</p>	<p>I am submitting a formal objection to the recent suggested changes to disabled parking in Witney High Street.</p> <p>Without due consultation with Blue Badge Holders in West Oxfordshire the facility to use the badge was suddenly removed from the west side of the High Street beginning outside Dentons and continuing until the crossing regulations came into play. It was thus for 42 years in my personal experience. I used my badge when it was an Orange Badge from 1976 to the present day which allowed me to use the Post Office and other facilities nearby of an essential</p>	<p>Issues regarding the consultation process for the 2011 proposals have been dealt with through the Council's procedures</p>

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	<p>nature. I considered my badge to be a privilege and used it with respect to other road users.</p> <p>A few years ago the pavement was greatly improved, (outside Dentons and onwards). Unfortunately the additional part of the pavement sloped downwards from the kerb. This made it very dangerous when getting wheelchairs out of vehicles as the chair could run away from the person because of the slope. It was equally dangerous for people using any sort of walking aid or had visual problems.</p> <p>I had a site meeting with a Technical Officer as a result of my concerns and in a very short time they re-laid the pavement so that it was flat and the kerb lower. Many others and I were very appreciative of this action and impressed with the response to the issue.</p> <p>The pavement on the other side (East) also sloped downwards, near Country Casuals Shop and onward. There was promise that it would be rectified the following financial year in the same way as the West Side. This promise was never kept.</p> <p>Reasons why the West Side should be used for the majority of Blue Badge Parking. The above is a key reason why Blue Badge Holders advise this side of the High Street, (west side). The pavement is wider flatter, safer and even. There is room for 8 vehicles on this side. There are no posts, poles or dangerous drains or broken kerb on this side.</p> <p>Physical reasons why the suggestions in the notice are not practical.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) There are too few spaces offered.b) The pavement is too narrow. (Outside Clarks Shoe shop the pavement is only 1.98m.). This is very dangerous for disabled people unloading walking aids/ wheelchairs and pedestrians walking by.	<p>The proposals are considered to represent a balanced approach to the management of traffic and parking in this part of Witney, and</p>
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	<p>c) Parts of the pavement are still sloping downwards. d) The suggested space by Boots has a pole in the way for getting chairs/walking aids out. The kerb is damaged and dangerous. The kerb is curved. The pedestrian traffic is high. e) Further down, the space by Country Casuals is too near the crossing island and dangerously near double-decker buses now driving round from Welch Way and squeezing through the narrow space of the traffic island. f) The suggested one space advised in the notice on the west side is in the worst possible place. There are short posts, a pole and a deep dangerous drain near the kerb. The pavement towards the post office is in dreadful repair for wheelchair users, visually impaired people, frail walkers and walking aid users. There is part of the wall in the way continuing down from the hill.</p> <p>Finally, the whole process has been handled very badly and disabled people have been put in a state of unnecessary anxiety. Too many officers/councillors have been involved in this mess and it seems officers fail to talk to each other. The whole process has made a joke of democracy and has brought shame on both councils.</p> <p>I request that you start again and go back to the original parking on the west side and add some Blue Badge parking at suitable spaces on the east side.</p>	<p>whilst they do not restore the facility previously available to Blue Badge holders they do create reserved parking places for the disabled wanting to visit the area.</p>
<p>Resident of Witney</p>	<p>I refer to Public Notice by Oxfordshire County Council which appeared in the Witney Gazette dated 14 November, 2012, relative to the above subject and list herewith my objections and representations regarding the proposals as follows:- (1) It is quite obvious that the Oxfordshire County Council have not taken in depth consideration of the following: (a) The problems and distress caused to disabled persons in changing their original circumstances completely and unnecessarily.</p>	<p>Officers have sought to understand the needs of all disabled people. The current proposals are considered to</p>

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	<p>(b) The new proposals do not take into consideration objections made by disabled persons since the unnecessary change.</p> <p>(2) It is absolutely essential that disabled parking should be back on the west side of High Street. The pavement is better, kerb lower, pavement wider. The east side has too many problems e.g. broken kerb edges which slope downwards, narrow pavement and poles in the way.</p> <p>(3) The one space offered on the east side by the Post Office could not be worse. It has broken pavement, part of a wall in the way causing a bad obstruction for the disabled, a deep drain in the road by the kerb plus poles and black posts.</p> <p>(4) Since the change even more disabled spaces are now necessary for many reasons. Could not further disabled spaces be made available on the east side near Country Casuals, Lloyds the Chemists? Judging by the fact that the disabled spaces in the Waitrose Car Park are frequently full (causing problems as there are no facilities to queue and two entrances cause even more problems) the demand for more disabled spaces accessible to the town centre is increased.</p>	<p>represent a balanced approach to the management of traffic and parking in this part of Witney and, whilst they do not restore the facility previously available to Blue Badge holders they do create reserved parking places for the disabled wanting to visit the area.</p>
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Name & Address	Response	Comment
<p>Owner, Witney Hotel, Church Green</p>	<p>There is already a shortage of parking spaces around the Green and it is quite a common occurrence to have to drive round and round waiting for a space to be become available. Then, when a space becomes available it may be a hundred meters or so away. So with children, elderly parents and shopping we have to walk a considerable distance to our front doors, whilst the residents of Oakfield place all have personal parking places outside their houses.</p> <p>As one of the many business on the Green I think I can safely say that parking is one our major concerns. Most businesses and residents would agree the</p>	<p>The lack of parking space in this part of Witney is recognised and opportunities to create additional short-term parking in the Church Green area will be pursued when resources allow.</p> <p>However the loss of a single space will significantly improve</p>

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	<p>situation at the moment is being controlled very well. Though there are still not enough spaces. The reduction of any parking spaces to please or accommodate a few individuals would penalise many people living on the Green and also impact business. This seems like madness.</p> <p>If this proposal were to be approved it would open the gates for all driveways on the Green to ask for easier access. The Tleece, the Masonic Hall, Saint Mary's School, Saint Mary's Church, the industrial estate, number one Church Green and so on.</p>	<p>the problems of egress from Oakfield Place.</p> <p>There is no intention to remove parking at these locations.</p>
Business, Church Green Witney	<p>We are in full support of removing the space between The Fleece and Oakfield entrances. Our parking is within Oakfield Place and I as with others do struggle with turning out of Oakfield Place when cars are parked in that space as it is very difficult to see oncoming traffic and have had near incidents in the past.</p>	Noted
Resident Oakfield Place Witney	<p>I sincerely hope that the planning people will agree to the double yellow lines in the vicinity of the Fleece before there is a serious accident.</p>	Noted
Resident Oakfield Place Witney	<p>I welcome the proposed change to parking restrictions Church Green Witney. At present there is a great risk of a accident occurring and I would be grateful of anything which will prevent this.</p>	Noted
Resident Oakfield Place Witney	<p>Thank you for your recent decision to consult on removing the parking space between Oakfield Place and The Fleece. I and several others have written numerous letters to OCC over the years about the hazard of driving out of Oakfield Place and turning right towards Butter Market.</p> <p>We are 13 separate residences with both garages and onsite parking spaces, plus 4 parking spaces allocated to a business in Church Green - together with service vehicle visits this amounts to a considerable amount of traffic.</p> <p>When the offending Church Green parking space is filled, particularly if the parked vehicle is a solid-sided van, our view to the right can be totally blocked.</p>	Noted

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	<p>We stop and then edge forward but cannot see if the road is clear until our bonnet is halfway across the road. And if something is parked on the far side (maybe illegally, but it regularly happens) this heightens the danger. We have ALL experienced near misses of this nature. Also there is often a delivery van/lorry for The Fleece temporarily there, adding to the danger.</p>	
<p>Resident Oakfield Place Witney</p>	<p>The entrance to Oakfield Place is narrow and offset in relation to the "Tarmac strip" across the grass verge. Though this tarmac strip does fan out slightly as it reaches the road on Church Green it is not wide enough to permit incoming vehicles to pass outgoing vehicles - and incoming traffic is forced to reverse out into the road (always a dangerous option) to allow vehicles to exit. The Oakfield Place driveway is long and narrow and it is not feasible for exiting vehicles to reverse away from the junction and return between the gate posts. Incoming traffic is thus forced to reverse out, sometimes into the path of passing traffic.</p>	<p>Noted</p>
<p>Resident of Oakfield Place Witney</p>	<p>The enclosed three photos show two damaged vehicles to the south of Oakfield Place gateway. This recent accident happened very close to the single parking space that you are consulting about, mid-morning in reasonable visibility but on wet roads. Had there been any pedestrians there, injuries would have been serious. It highlights the difficulties in turning right out of The Fleece car park or from Oakfield Place. Parked vehicles, particularly 4x4s and side-windowless delivery vans etc, can totally block this view.</p>	<p>Noted</p>
<p>Resident of Oakfield Place Witney</p>	<p>I am so delighted to get the good news of one car space being removed from outside our entrance to Oakfield Road. It will make an enormous difference to all our residents apart from being always so very dangerous to "risk" moving out on to Church Green.</p>	<p>Noted</p>
<p>Resident of 9 Oakfield Place</p>	<p>Re proposed change to parking restrictions to remove parking for 2 hours on area on Church Breen by entrance to Oakfield Place. I am delighted to read of this proposal as it will make entering and departing</p>	<p>Noted</p>

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Witney	from Oakfield Place a lot safer.	
Resident of Oakfield Place Witney	<p>I am writing to thank you for your letter of 15 November 2012 and the proposal to remove the single 2-hour parking place on Church Green in the vicinity of The Fleece Hotel.</p> <p>Having egressed from Oakfield Place almost every day for the last 11 years and experienced and seen many near misses when a van or car parked in the aforesaid parking place has obstructed the view of the road to the right, this is a very welcome and well advised proposal.</p> <p>With a primary school located close by there is an increased risk of an accident to small children and their guardians, particularly at the start and end of a school day, times when the traffic on Church Green is more pronounced and busy and the risk of injury elevated and in a more severe scenario the risk of a major tragedy.</p>	Noted