

Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning & Townscape Committee held at the Town Hall, Rye on Monday 3 April 2023

PRESENT Councillors David Bookless, Mike Boyd, Bernardine Fiddimore, Pat Hughes, Andi Rivett (Mayor), Shaun Rogers, Andy Stuart
(**Committee Chairman** – Deputy Mayor)

IN ATTENDANCE Richard Farhall – Town Clerk; Colonel Anthony Kimber – RNP Co-ordinator

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm

99 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence – and the reason as lodged with the Clerk – were accepted from Councillor Vagn Hansen and Chris Hoggart (**Committee Vice-Chairman**).

100 CODE OF CONDUCT: DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest nor requests for dispensation.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting for public questions/contributions. There was none and the meeting reconvened.

101 MINUTES

RESOLVED To confirm the accuracy of the Minutes of the Planning and Townscape meeting held on 20 March 2023 (PT16).

102 MATTERS ARISING

Item	Status
Gilfrin Jewellers (side) - exploring the implications of RTC applying for advertising consent (community banners)	Outstanding – Confirm support of Gilfrin Jewellers and apply for advertising consent.
Obtain costings to improve signage to the town centre within Gibbet Marsh Car Park	Ongoing – forms part of the work of the Parking Strategy Review Group
Checking on the status of the s106 funds held by RDC for the Rye Greenway	Actioned – awaiting response

103 RYE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN: PARKING

Members considered Colonel Kimber's updated Parking in Rye discussion paper (**APPENDIX**).

Rother CPE Review – Final consultation It was noted that, because RTC's request that the double yellow lines proposed in Military Road and Harbour Road be extended, ESCC has recorded RTC's comments as objections to the relevant Drawings. The Clerk advised that, once the Parking Team had finished assessing comments on the Draft TRO, the Head of the Team would contact him with the Team's thoughts - prior to recommendations going to a ESCC Planning Committee meeting (an opportunity for the public to make further representations).

Comments included:

- Overall, the introduction of CPE had been a success – improving on street parking turnover and significantly reducing abuse of parking controls.

- The Cattle Market is, potentially, a prime development site.
- The impact of the Cattle Market not being available would be substantial.
- The RNP does not provide for housing on the Cattle Market site.
- Any improvements (eg automated entry/exit) at the Cattle Market could be a precursor to increased charges.
- RDC has committed to improving signage to Gibbet Marsh (in liaison with Highways).
- If the Cattle Market was no longer available (partly/wholly) – or demand for parking increased generally - the Gibbet Marsh overflow would need to be upgraded to permit winter use.
- Brighton and Maidstone have lost their park and ride car parks to residential development.
- Another site is required for parking.
- There are few options for a new car park.
- The Cattle Market might get sold to the likes of NCP.
- The provision of EVCPs needs to be pursued with RDC.
- There might be space for EVCPs near the electricity sub-station at the entrance to Rock Channel East.
- A Transport Select Committee report suggests those in rural areas should be allowed to continue to use petrol/diesel/hybrids for the foreseeable future because of the lack of charging infrastructure.
- EVs are more of a viable proposition in cities/large towns.
- Gibbet Marsh is still perceived to be ‘out of town’ – visitors feel that they are travelling further away from the town centre.
- EVs are expensive (at least 30k) and replacement batteries can be £6k-£8k.
- Gibbet Marsh is busier but there remains spare capacity in the summer.
- Road signage needs to conform with strict national protocols.
- Signing to car parks needs to be simpler and clearer.
- Directional markings on the road can be less confusing for drivers.
- Many drivers disregard signage in favour of using their satnavs and Google Maps.
- Some drivers have said they don’t use Gibbet Marsh because of inadequate lighting in the winter.
- The range of EV batteries in the winter drops.
- Increased signage can create confusion.
- Although there might not be many EVs in Rye, increasingly, visitors will expect them to be provided.
- Cinque Ports Street would benefit from a loading bay in the vicinity of Bargain Box.
- This issues raised would normally have been considered first by the Highways Forum.

RESOLVED 1 To pursue the provision of EVCPs – and the creation of a back-up plan in the event of the Cattle Market not being available for parking – after the Election.

RESOLVED 2 To seek to revive the Highways Forum.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.22pm

Date

Chairman

RNP - Parking in Rye Traffic and Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE)**Introduction**

1. Typical of any medieval town, with narrow roads, lack of space and many visitors, there are significant traffic issues in and around Rye. With Sussex Police targeting its resources elsewhere, traffic regulations enforcement from 2020 is by Rother-wide Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) managed by ESCC. This regime is focused onto the centre of the Rye where the connected Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) ¹ (legal instruments) apply.

2. Many in Rye agree that CPE provides improved enforcement of the regulations but does have consequences.

3. For those who know Rye well, any measure applied to one part invariably affects at least one other. Where CPE solves some issues; others continue, such as:

a. a displacement of vehicles seeking free parking in the non regulated outer streets. This tends to aggravate the traffic situation in areas within 10 minutes walk of the Centre. As examples, it is now customary for some non residents to park in Kings Ave, Military Rd and in several places in the west of Rye where parking is unrestricted;

b. a post code lottery for the very limited residents' parking places, which works well for a few but discriminates against others who might live within feet of entitled citizens;

c. limited parking for those visiting citizens in residential areas;

d. few short term parking places in regulated places for essential unloading and deliveries to both business and residential addresses. Following the experience with the loading bay at the George, there is an argument for more loading bays in the High Street, perhaps one additional east and one west.

e. Blue badge parking that clutters restricted roads, often for well over the regulated time period (3 hours), causing blockages for larger vehicles;

4. There is little talk now of a Fast Rail link, but should it arrive then it is likely to greatly increase demand for parking places around the Station and probably aggravate displacement.

5. In 2019, Rye Town Council formed a group of Councillors and citizens to consider the issues. Their work follows the consideration of all those factors affecting traffic

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1984/27/contents>

issues that took place as part of the work to develop the Rye Neighbourhood Plan (RNP)².

6. Although CPE is a legal process which ESCC regards as limited to the streets where TROs apply, the experience points to the need for a holistic review of all traffic issues.

7. This paper considers the impacts of CPE and wider traffic issues in and around Rye, concurrent with the work by the Local Authority and East Sussex County Council (ESCC) to review the early working of the CPE regime. It is to promote discussion.

The Parking Requirement

8. Several main groups in Rye have been identified with differing parking interests: the visitors; Citadel residents; other residents; transport organisations, traders and business people. Rye is a "service centre" and as such attracts people from outlying parts and the surrounding villages. All this makes for a complex situation, not only in the confined space of the centre of Rye, but also in its unrestricted outer streets.

9. There are trends, towards more on line deliveries which add to the vehicles of tradesmen working on the old buildings. Both result in many vans in Rye centre.

10. Residents' parking is contentious. Many believe that there should be a universal residents parking scheme for those in the Centre, perhaps time limited and restricted to one badge per household, to encourage all residents to make arrangements for their long term parking (garages or long term passes on the paysites – many already do this). Hotels need to do the same. The selling of multiple street permits for overnight guests discriminates against those residents and others paying council tax and business rates.

11. In the absence of a town wide traffic study, it is still possible to draw some conclusions from the experience of day to day traffic and how it rises at peak visitor times, such as festivals and events. There are identifiable parking patterns and areas where congestion routinely occurs.

12. Earlier discussion within the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (Rye Neighbourhood Plan July 2019 footnote 2) suggested that car use should decline. However this is not borne out by experience.

13. With introduction of CPE and the resultant reduction of some street parking, some have argued that additional vehicle spaces are required (to the current 900) but no figure is supported by evidence.

14. Many criticise the signage to car parks as muddled. There is a need to more effectively signpost and manage the existing spaces perhaps to intercept visitors' vehicles and to provide long term parking for residents and the business community.

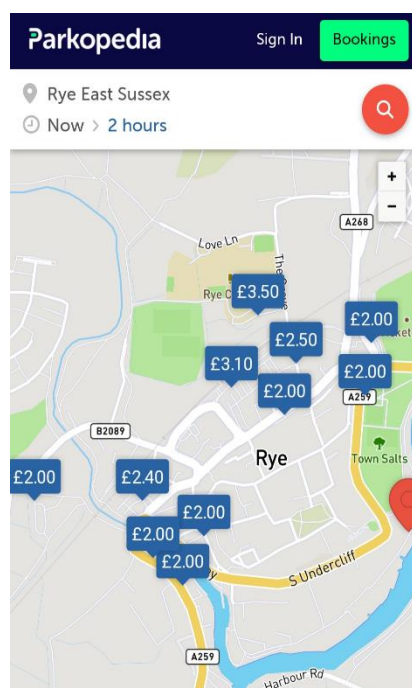
² <https://www.rother.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning-2/made-neighbourhood-plans/rye-neighbourhood-plan/>

Importantly there appears to be no real strategy for directing visitors, as signs have tended to be erected piecemeal. This is an area that would benefit from an overview and improvement.

15. Perhaps a zonal system could be created with inner, middle and outer parks clearly identified. Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points are scarce and future points should be built into the parking scheme.

Off Street Parking in Rye

16. For those visitors with smartphones, there are multiple website platforms indicating parking in Rye. Local Authorities have sites with guidance. In addition there is Just Park, Parkopedia (as below) and Trip Advisor. Many hospitality locations also provide parking advice.



More parking?

17. There is a fresh call for more parking. Those working on the Rye NP considered the need for additional parking but there was no consensus on any proposal, other than to accept that Gibbet Marsh is generally under used. Some were against the use of the Salts. Others saw a two storey option on one or two existing sites (suitably screened) on the North side of the Centre: (1) the cattle market (the Thursday market could be allocated one level on Thursday) (2) the Leisure Centre park. Both would require significant investment.

18. What are the options? First it should be noted that three, widely mentioned, are unlikely to be achievable.

- a. **Camberfields** (marsh land immediately east of the Monkbretton Bridge) was a possibility but has recently been sold by Rother DC and is now to be partly subsumed by the Eastern Rother Tidal Walls (Flood Defence) Scheme.

- b. **The Lower School Site** presents potential for car parking. Indeed the RNP identified that use as an option along with education, commercial and housing. However, it is now in private hands with an extant planning permission for housing. Therefore it cannot be considered for re-allocation at this stage. In any case if it was reallocated then it could jeopardise the RNP's ability to meet its housing target rendering the RNP out of conformity with higher policy.
- c. **Former Tilling Green School/Tilling Green Centre** (Owned by ESCC but for disposal): The RNP allocates this for housing. It could support a Rye TC partnership project for social housing of around 20 dwellings, as per the RNP allocation.

19. Other assessed options are listed in order of perceived achievability. Any new site would need detailed study by experts to identify any additional works for surface, control features, access and security.

- a. **Gibbet Marsh overflow** (Public realm owned by Rother DC): to consider the improvement of the (signs are much criticised) grass car park exists (200 spaces) with ready pedestrian access to the Strand. For regular all weather use it would need ground preparation and enhanced security. It could also provide the base for a park and ride facility. The main entrance has been improved by the trimming of the two substantial chestnut trees at the barrier entrance.
- b. **Town (Fair) Salts** (Public realm owned by Rother DC): to consider the installation of some ground mesh to provide a seasonal (Mar to Sep) extension to the existing Rother DC car park. The grass area is used occasionally by the Rye Bowls Club for their events. It is also the traditional site for the fairground and of course Rye bonfire and therefore would be unavailable at times.
- c. **Town (Cricket/sports) Salts - Bedford Place** (Public realm by Rother DC): to consider the enlargement of this small car park due east onto the Salts. By doing so imaginatively it would not affect either the sports pitches or the skate park.
- d. **Rye Leisure Centre** (ESCC): to consider the potential for a two storey screened enhancement close to the Station and Town. There are rights of way and vital drainage through the site to be preserved but it has the potential for development by a third party, which could double its capacity.
- e. **Rye Academy**: to consider with the Executive Head the scope (suggested at the 2019 Town Meeting) for temporary use of Academy space out of school hours.

- f. **Rugby Club:** (Rye TC sub lets from ESCC and sub lets to the Club): to consider with the club, use of the hard standing with access from the A259, on a temporary basis when the club is not operating.
- g. **Rock Channel East** (Environment Agency leased and managed by Rye Partnership): to consider with Rye Partnership the scope for some limited parking.
- h. **Former Freda Gardham School** (Owned by ESCC, but leased with options to a developer): to consider with the developer in the context of the RNP, any scope for some parking and perhaps with EV charging. All would be subject to the work on the Eastern Rother Tidal Walls Scheme. There is a 2000 sq m hard standing with access from the A259 to the north of the old school building which could provide parking for 50 vehicles. It would provide revenue for ESCC, but would need to be controlled to prevent misuse.

Conclusion

20. Many of Rye's traffic issues result from the confined nature of the Town and the large number of visitors. CPE has improved enforcement but has resulted in the displacement of vehicles to unregulated streets. Some claim that there is a shortage of spaces, but existing parks (900 spaces) could be better signed and utilised. Some oppose "covering" Rye with more car parks but there is potential for the creation of some new space, subject to evidence. This paper identifies several potential additional sites but any proposals should not jeopardise the RNP to meet its housing targets. Residents' parking needs further consideration. A strategic review of signage is overdue perhaps to create inner, middle and outer zones with EV charging. All proposals for change would be subject to detailed planning proposals.

Anthony Kimber PhD
RNP Coordinator

For Ease of Reference - RNP Comments on ESCC CPE Proposals

Three comments in the context of the Rye Neighbourhood Plan and related policy:

- Nothing in the CPE proposals should conflict with the policy and related matters set out in the made (8 July 2019) Rye Neighbourhood Plan (in particular pages 60 and 91)

- Metering devices and signage installed as street furniture should comply with the spirit and word of the Rother Core Strategy for Rye: "To conserve and enhance the unique built character and quality of the Citadel and its distinctive landscape"

- Measures for residents' parking should, where at all possible be seen to comply with Rother District's equality policy and be "fair and equal" to all across the area which is the subject to the regulation.