

**IDEAS & VISION GROUP - TRANSPORT, PARKING & ACCESS ISSUES**  
**NOTES OF THE MEETING ON 25<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2013**

**Present:** Janet Miller, Jean Ball, Jean Todd, Linda Baldry, Mike Bryant, Pat Chapman, Rachel Hoodith, Roddie MacLean

**Observing:** Charles Jolly

**Apologies:** Adrian Brown, Carole Mordant-Todd, Joe Dugdale, Sarah Rawlinson, Tom Rhodes

**1. AIM OF THE MEETING**

The aim was to share ideas and prepare for meetings in due course with HPBC and DCC. It was agreed we need to ascertain the facts, elicit HPBC/DCC current thinking, and then develop firm proposals to put to them. While the issues of on and off street parking and public transport are clearly intimately linked, they are dealt with by different departments in different authorities, so we may have to address them separately in the first instance. It was recognised that while some things could be tackled relatively quickly, we also need a long term strategic vision of what we are aiming for, as regards parking, public transport and access to the town centre generally.

**2. ASCERTAINING THE FACTS**

**2.1 Reports, Studies & Strategic Plans**

A large number of studies have been carried out into parking over the years, by both HPBC and DCC.

There is a Design and Place Marketing Strategy for Buxton that we need to review, decide if it is still appropriate and if so what are its implications.

There must also be a DCC Strategic Plan for Transport.

**2.2 Common Complaints & Are they Justified?**

- (i) **"Parking in Buxton is more expensive than elsewhere"** - According to one national study we are about average. People usually make comparisons between Buxton and the towns nearby, though; there are comparative figures in a 2009 DCC report it is not known if there is any more recent information.
- (ii) **"People would shop in Buxton if parking was free"** - the view was that visitors to the town are less put off by having to pay to park, than are residents and people who work in the town. There is a season ticket scheme but it is not well used, and perhaps needs more promotion, especially with employers, on a bulk discount basis.
- (iii) **"There isn't enough Parking space"** - A large part of the problem could be the lack of signage indicating where the parking areas are, as less obvious car parks are rarely full. Demand for parking is also very variable.
- (iv) **"The car parks are in a very run down state"** - Certainly true of the car park on Market Street.
- (v) **"Buses are unreliable and run at the wrong time"** - There does not appear to be any attempt at an integrated strategy between trains and buses, and there is a lack of buses in the early morning or evening.

**3. DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM**

**3.1 Off Street Parking**

- (i) **Numbers of Spaces** - According to a 2009 report, there are 1029 spaces in HPBC sites, a further 162 in private sites (Aldi, Iceland, the Railway Station etc, but not including Morrisons). One study apparently concluded that by 2016, assuming background growth and town centre developments, there would be a shortage of 500 spaces in the town during peak periods.
- (ii) **Pay & Display v Barriers** - It was pointed out that our current pay and display system encourages people to stay as short a time as possible, dashing back before the ticket runs out. A barrier system with payment on exit would be far better for retaining people in the town and would probably also bring in more revenue to HPBC.
- (iii) **Reimbursement Schemes** - Schemes where shops will reimburse parking costs in exchange for a minimum spend do work elsewhere and should be properly looked into.
- (iv) **Spring Gardens Car Park** - There is a question over its long term availability, because the land is owned by Threadneedle and the lease will expire in about 20 years.
- (v) **Seasonal Variation** - It was noted that there are 'pinch points' - mainly summer weekends - when parking is harder to find, it was suggested that we could identify seasonal overflow parking eg at the Community School, the Post Office Sorting Office.
- (vi) **Park & Ride** - Another alternative would be Park & Ride sites at the top of Fairfield (Waterswallows area?) and on the A515 (Staden Lane area?). A rule of thumb was quoted, that at least 300 spaces are needed to generate enough revenue to pay for the shuttle buses; presumably distance is a factor in this.
- (vii) **Station Parking** - The disused loco maintenance site off Palace Road has been looked at as potential additional parking area. DB Schenke are in principle willing for the site to be redeveloped but obviously want to maximise their income from doing so - but they are not prepared to pay for the cost of the necessary site surveys and development work. Car parking here though would enable better use of the area in front of the station for eg taxi rank and bus stops, as well as more parking per se..
- (viii) **The University** - This is a particular problem, with not enough parking for staff let alone students. The buses stack up on Devonshire Road at peak times, and instead park on St John's Road with resulting traffic problems;

parking regulations are not enforced against buses and the bus companies seem unable to control their drivers' behaviour. The situation is likely to get worse with the introduction of new low-line buses, because of the excessive camber (and high centre ridge) of Devonshire Road. The questions were raised as to what onus there is on a major employer to provide adequate parking for its employees, and whether the University could do more to encourage staff and students to use buses instead of driving.

### **3.2 Signage & Way-finding**

It was noted that there are no signs as you enter Buxton to direct visitors to car parks, as is normal in most towns. Even if visitors find their way to a car park there is then very little to direct them where to go in the town. Paul Armstrong has developed an ambitious plan for way-finding in the town, but it does not include directing arrivals to Car Parking, and is very expensive and will take several years to implement. The consensus of the meeting was that we should be able to do something cheaper more quickly.

### **3.3 On Street Parking**

On street parking is controlled by DCC Highways, whose priorities are not necessarily the same as ours - they want to ensure road safety obviously, but beyond that they want to maximise their revenue, and are less influenced by any potential knock-on effects on the town.

DCC consultants have carried out a number of studies, the feeling is that these have been done piecemeal, looking at small problem areas, solutions are applied but this merely shifts the problem elsewhere. On several occasions consultations have been carried out but then dismissed, because too few residents bothered to respond. The various reports are not always easy to find.

The resident's parking permit costs £35 a year, but is only valid at certain times. Very different views were expressed as to whether residents should have to pay for parking on street at all, and discussion as to whether or not a permit payable on an annual basis, that allowed free parking at any time, was workable.

### **3.4 Public Transport**

It was noted that the bus network is far better than it was say twenty years ago, and it was noted that far more visitors to the town now travel here by public transport. With the current financial situation, though, there is concern that there will be cuts, and loss of service, some detrimental changes have already been made. It was generally agreed that we need better linkage between trains, buses and bike use, and to encourage more use of all of them. Ideally both trains and buses would accept bikes on board, and more secure bike parking is needed, for instance at the Railway Station.

The possibility of the railway to Matlock re-opening needs to be born in mind, in the short term, one possible solution to make the link between Buxton and the start of the Monsal Trail (Blackwell Mill Cottages) could be a shuttle train using the old station platform behind Aldi.

### **3.5 Traffic Congestion**

Fairfield Road and the roundabouts at the bottom of it are a daily bottleneck at peak times. The 'Meeting Regarding Buxton' that Roddie attended recently discussed the effect of the new road between Hazel Grove and Manchester Airport, it is anticipated that the traffic using the A6 through Buxton will increase considerably, with even more congestions as a result. In theory there is mitigation funding available, which could possibly go to providing additional rail services - there was no mention of buses.

A Park & Ride at Fairfield as discussed above would help. Another suggestion was to sign tourists via the 'scenic route' over Long Hill, which has the added advantage of bringing them in to a more attractive view of the town.

## **4. ACTION POINTS**

Linda will collate all the studies and plans relating to parking and public transport that have been produced in recent years by HPBC and DCC.

Pat will read these and extract any facts relevant to the above discussion points. He may need to delegate some of this work to others.

Roddie will gather together information on way-finding and signage proposals including directions to car parking.

JCMM  
26Feb13