



ALEXANDRA PARK AND PALACE JOINT MEETING OF THE STATUTORY ADVISORY AND CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES

1st September 2020

Report Title: Car Park Charging Proposals

Report of: Louise Stewart, CEO

Purpose: *This paper provides the findings of the parking charges survey, the proposed discounts/ exemptions for certain user groups, and next steps.*

1. Recommendation

To discuss the information and provide advice and feedback to the Trustee Board on the public feedback to the car park charging proposals.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Following initial consultation with the SAC & CC on 29th January 2019 (Appendix 1, extract from minutes), Alexandra Park and Palace Charitable Trust (APPCT) announced in February 2019, its intention to investigate the feasibility of introducing parking charges across the site.
- 2.2 In April 2019, Integrated Transport Planning Ltd (ITP) a consultancy firm specialising in this field, were asked to provide support to APPCT to inform a review of existing car parking arrangements at APP. Following this review, ITP assisted APP to develop proposals for the introduction of parking charges across the site.
- 2.3 From Monday 11th November 2019 to Friday 10th January 2020 (60 days) we asked stakeholders, beneficiaries, visitors and local residents for views on the proposals via an online survey. 2,121 completed surveys were received. We also held a series of informal drop-in sessions at Alexandra Palace for people to meet with APPCT staff to talk about the proposal and share their views, attended by approximately 20 people in total.
- 2.4 The online survey consisted of a series of closed questions to determine:
 - Frequency and reasons people visit APP;
 - How people travel to APP;
 - Where people visiting APP are travelling from;
 - People's views on the introduction of parking charges at APP;
 - What, if any, impact the introduction of parking charges would have on people's visits to APP
- 2.5 These questions were supplemented with several open questions enabling respondents to provide more detailed answers about their views on the parking charge proposals. Demographic questions were also asked to ensure that respondents reflect the breadth and depth of different people who visit APP and determine whether the proposals affect some visitors more than others.

- 2.6 The survey was accompanied by a document outlining the proposal and a document providing answers to frequently asked questions. The survey and accompanying documents were published on the APP website. Hard copies of information were made available at the Ice Rink and East Court receptions.
- 2.7 We received over 500 suggestions from survey respondents as to how to amend the proposals to alleviate their concerns. The top suggestion (181) was to provide exemptions or discounts for certain user groups.
- 2.8 In response to this, the Trust undertook a comprehensive exercise to ascertain whether certain user groups could warrant a discount or exemption. We examined suggestions across 34 user groups. One of the key tests was to determine whether the user group already contributes to the Charity, financially, or whether it be evidenced that the user group would be significantly financially disadvantaged in relation to the general public and other similar sites and whether the activity itself is in accordance with the Charity's mission of providing enjoyment and recreation for public benefit. Out of the 34 user groups examined, a discount or exemption has been suggested for 18 of them.

3. Survey Findings

Location of respondents

- 3.1 The location of respondents were from a wide variety of locations throughout the UK, but as expected, focussed in London, particularly around the areas of Alexandra Park and Palace. The postcode districts with the highest number of respondents are:
- N10, Muswell Hill – 465 respondents;
 - N22, Wood Green – 364 respondents;
 - N8, Crouch End – 295 respondents;
 - N11, Southgate – 82 respondents;
 - N2, East Finchley – 53 respondents

Frequency of visits

- 3.2 Most survey respondents visit the site on a regular basis, with over three quarters (81%) reporting they visit at least once a month. The highest proportion reported visiting APP on a weekly basis, accounting for almost half (48.5%) of the 2,121 surveyed.

Reason for visits

- 3.3 Respondents gave a wide range of reasons for visiting, but the key reason (53%) was to take a walk, relax or have a picnic. A third of respondents reported visit reasons as - attending an event (33%), to go ice skating or play ice hockey (30%) or visiting the farmers market (30%).

Methods of travel

- 3.4 The main mode of transport given by respondents was by car (56.9%). A third (34.8%) of respondents travel to site on foot. Relatively low proportions of respondents (4.5%) travel by public transport.

Views on proposals from local residents

- 3.5 At Q7, the survey asked respondents to identify who they were responding as – ‘local resident’ was one of the options. Those that ticked ‘local resident’ were then asked a specific question about perceived impacts on the local area. ITP undertook some additional cross-tabulation work for this question to establish the catchment area of those respondents who perceive themselves to be a ‘local’ resident. ITP have defined ‘local’ residents as living in postcodes within 2-2.5 miles of APP (1,228 survey respondents). Approximately 90% of respondents in these postcodes self-identified as ‘local’ residents. More than three quarters of ‘local resident’ respondents (82%) felt that charges would have a negative impact on the local area. One in fifteen local residents (7%) felt the proposals would have a positive impact.

Support for the introduction of parking charges – all respondents

- 3.6 Almost a fifth (18%) of all respondents agreed that they supported the principle of introducing parking charges. Almost three quarters (73%) disagreed.

Changing habits

- 3.7 Respondents were asked whether the introduction of parking charges at APP would result in them choosing to spend less time at APP. Of the 255 respondents who outlined how their behaviour would change, 150 said they would either not go to APP or would go elsewhere. There were 560 respondents who named alternative locations they would visit instead. The five most popular destinations mentioned by respondents were:
- Hampstead Heath (95);
 - Highgate Woods (79);
 - Trent Park (59);
 - Lea Valley (54); and
 - Finsbury Park (27)
- 3.8 The only one of these destinations that offers free, on-site parking is Trent Park.
- 3.9 A high number of respondents (193) provided more generic responses about alternative locations they might visit including; other parks (123), other ice rinks (52), other garden centres (20) and other cafes (14).

Perceived negative impacts

- 3.10 Parking displacement was the key negative impact, expressed by a total of 980 of all respondents.
- 3.11 The highest number of concerns raised about parking displacement were on Dukes Ave (30) and The Ave (30), both of which have direct pedestrian access in to the Park and do not have parking restrictions. Some respondents reported that they expected parking displacement to occur on clusters of roads including Warner Road Estate (4), and the roads off Priory Road (1). Some survey respondents reported that parking displacement is already an issue, and believed that the introduction of charging will make this worse.
- 3.12 Other perceived negative impacts were:
- Reduced visitor numbers (350);
 - Increased traffic/ congestion in the local area (139);
 - Disproportionate impact on certain users groups (136)

In addition to these perceived negative impacts, 127 respondents mentioned they would oppose Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs), which they felt would likely be implemented

in the local area, by the Local Authority, as a result of the introduction parking charges at APP, combined with the existing parking pressure in the area.

Reduced visitor numbers

- 3.13 A total of 350 respondents felt the introduction of parking charges could result in fewer people choosing to visit APP. The most frequently mentioned negative impact as a result of the fall in visitors was the knock-on effect on local businesses. Respondents referred to the potential impact on the garden centre, Little Dinosaurs, local shops, restaurants and childcare facilities.

Increased traffic/ congestion in the local area

- 3.14 138 respondents indicated a negative impact of parking charges would be an increase in traffic and congestion. Poorer air quality was cited, as well as concerns over road safety.

Access issues for some user groups

- 3.15 A total of 136 respondents expressed concerns about the potential disproportionate impact on some user groups. The greatest number questioned the affordability of parking charges for households on low income (43) and children who might miss out on recreational/ sporting opportunities (41). Disabled visitors (21) and elderly visitors (18) were also thought to be disadvantaged by the proposals, particularly as these groups might not meet the Blue Badge criteria.

Low income households

- 3.16 Half of the 43 respondents who expressed concerns about the disproportionate impact of parking charges on low income households preferred not to state their income. Of the 21 respondents who stated their income, 12% reported a household income of £20,001 - £30,000 and 12% a household income of £30,001 - £40,000. It is difficult to say with any certainty whether those respondents that raised concerns about the impact on low income households were actually from low income households themselves, as so many respondents did not state their income.

Disability/ health issues

- 3.17 Of those that mentioned impacts on disabled visitors (21 respondents), 57% (12) reported that their day-to-day activities are limited due to a health problem or disability.

Elderly visitors

- 3.18 Eight (44%) of the 18 respondents who expressed concerns about the impact on elderly visitors were aged over 64 years. A fifth (22%) were aged under 45 years.

Support for proposals

- 3.19 Most respondents who indicated they were supportive of the proposals did not outline the reasons behind their support. Of those respondents that provided an explanation, the main reasons were:
- That the proposals would provide income support to APP (32);
 - That the proposals would help reduce traffic or emissions (20);
 - The proposals would help tackle anti-social behaviour (12);
 - A handful (10) of respondents said they would support the proposals if a CPZ was introduced too;
 - The same number (10) were supportive as they felt it would tackle issues with commuter parking around APP in the daytime.

Proposed solutions

- 3.20 Many respondents put forward suggestions about changes to the proposals to address the concerns they identified. Around 500 suggestions were given, including:
- Providing free/ discounted parking for certain user groups (181);
 - Reducing the proposed parking tariffs (93); and
 - Increasing the grace period (48)
- 3.21 Reducing the tariff was put forward by 93 respondents. In contrast, 7 respondents indicated they felt the charges were reasonable. Some (48) suggested the grace period be increased. Most (20) thought it should be an hour.

4. User Groups and Tariff Structure Assessments

User Groups

- 4.1 A total of 181 respondents suggested that discounted or free parking should be provided for certain user groups or facilities users. The central suggestion expressed was that those users who were already paying to use the facilities at APP should receive some sort of dispensation from the proposed parking charges.
- 4.2 In addition to the surveys, the Trust received 25 supplementary email comments/ responses from individuals and organisations via the consultation@alexandrapalace.com inbox (of the 25, 13 opposed the proposals, 3 supported, a further 2 were conditionally supportive and the remaining 6 were neutral).
- 4.3 Of the 25 comments/ responses, nearly half (12) suggested exemptions be provided for certain user groups.
- 4.4 In direct response to these comments, the Trust has undertaken an exercise to ascertain whether certain user groups could warrant a discount or exemption. As stated in the earlier paragraph (2.7) one of the key tests is whether the user group already contributes to the Charity, financially, whether it can be evidenced that the user group would be significantly financially disadvantaged in relation to the general public and other similar sites and whether the activity itself is in accordance with the Charity's mission of providing enjoyment and recreation for public benefit.

Tariffs

- 4.5 We have not received feedback that provides compelling enough evidence that the charges are out of kilter with similar facilities across the country, and in particular, in London. The tariff structure proposed is considered appropriate for the following reasons:
- The work that ITP have undertaken previously to establish the recommended tariff structure was based upon a robust analysis of similar comparable sites in London and elsewhere, consideration of the complex user/ visitor groups to APP and further corroboration with local parking charges;
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 - We know that from the accumulation survey data taken in June 2019, 5-15min (drop-off and pick-up) and 1-2 hours are the most popular durations. One third (33%) of vehicles stay on site for under 30min. As such, a high proportion of visitors will benefit from the 30min grace period;

- As set out above, we have taken on board the feedback survey comments made with regards to certain existing visitors to the Park and Palace. Tariffs will be adjusted for certain user groups – an assessment of each User Group has been undertaken and the Trust feel that the adjustments are fair and reasonable, based on the principle that the user group is already regularly contributing to the charity, either financially, as part of the Trust’s purpose, or both.

5. Further work

- 5.1 To continue the momentum of the project while meetings could not go ahead:
- In April, virtual meetings were offered to Alexandra, Bounds Green, Fortis Green, Hornsey, Muswell Hill, Crouch End and Noel Park Ward Councillors to discuss the findings.
 - In May a meeting took place (virtually) with Hornsey Ward Councillors where feedback from local
 - Conversations have been taking place with Haringey’s Transport Team around commuter parking and other local parking issues.
- 5.2 In June the Trust made an initial approach to the Charity Commission to outline its proposals and seek their views. At the time of writing this report the Trust is awaiting a response.
- 5.3 An update was communicated to stakeholders by email and on the website.
- 5.4 Additional context is also provided by the current ‘donate to park’ in operation at the Palace. The Covid-19 Pandemic caused an almost total loss of income to the Trust combined with an increase in costs due to misuse of the park. To alleviate pressure we reopened the car parks (that had been closed along with the Palace building on March 17th). To cover the cost to the Charity, a temporary donation system was introduced in May, which suggested a £3 donation to the Charity for parking, via a socially distanced tap to donate facility. This has been positively received with only a small number of drivers declining to make a donation.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Council’s Assistant Director of Corporate Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report.
- 6.2 Charities may charge for the services or facilities they offer.
- 6.3 Section 105 of the Charities Act 2011(CA11) empowers the Charity Commission to sanction any proposed action in the charity’s administration that is expedient in the interests of the charity.
- 6.4 The Board must conscientiously consider the responses to the consultation and take these into account before making a final decision.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Extract – 29 January 2019 SAC/CC minutes

8. Background Documents

Consultation Document Suite: Survey questions, FAQs and briefing, Consultant reports and survey analysis, Equality Impact Assessment *in progress*