

Seaside Road Parking Strategy

1. Background

It is proposed to carry out street improvements and traffic management works to Seaside Road, during 2003/4. Seaside Road is adjacent to the town centre. It forms part of the A259, the main coast road linking Eastbourne with Brighton and Hastings. It is currently a very congested street, where parking space is at a premium. Car parking provision for all users of the street, and delivery arrangements for local businesses, are key issues to be addressed in the new designs for the street.

2. Current problems

Parking problems were one of the key issues identified by local residents and traders in responses given in a recent questionnaire about how they would like to see Seaside Road improved. Those who attended the public advice surgery on the street improvements, at T.J.Hughes in March 2002, also identified parking as a high priority.

It is evident that there are currently severe problems in finding vacant parking spaces on Seaside Road. Much of Seaside Road has a current parking restriction that vehicles can only park for 2 hours maximum, and must not return to the road within the next two hours. The existing on-street parking restrictions are not being observed by motorists. Also, the restrictions are not being enforced effectively by the traffic regulatory authorities. As well as causing problems for existing residents and traders, it is also likely that these existing parking problems could act as a disincentive to potential new business investors and people looking for homes in the Seaside Road area.

3. The street improvement scheme

Seaside Road is the focus of the Council's current regeneration activity. Potential funding has recently been identified to carrying out an environmental improvement scheme on the street. The proposed scheme for Seaside Road will involve making the street one-way, in an easterly direction, between Terminus Road and Cavendish Place. It will also involve building out some of the pavements on the north (sunny) side of the street. This will provide an opportunity to create a more pleasant street environment and an opportunity for the provision of chairs and tables outside the restaurants, with the potential to generate a more lively street scene, a higher footfall, and more custom for local businesses.

The existing street environment on Seaside Road is very poor. The street is heavily trafficked, the pavements are narrow, and the general quality of the public space and the street furniture is poor. However, the Council has come to the conclusion that, an improved environment can only be achieved through the loss of some on-street parking spaces. A balance needs to be achieved between the need to park on the street and the need to improve the street environment and attract people into the area. At present, there are 13 general use on street parking spaces between Terminus Road and Cavendish Place. The proposed scheme will result in a reduction to 11 general use on street parking spaces, but with an additional 3 spaces allocated for disabled drivers plus three new loading bays. The Council is aware that the loss of any general use parking may be viewed negatively by local residents and traders, and so has set out a proposal (see point 5, below) for trying to make better use of the parking spaces available in the area.

4. Proposal for Decriminalised parking

The Council is proposing to introduce decriminalised parking enforcement throughout Eastbourne before the end of 2004. This will mean that the Council will have control of the enforcement of on-street parking restrictions. The Council will use its new powers to enforce parking restrictions more vigorously, and to encourage a better availability of parking spaces for what are considered to be priority users.

Decriminalisation will be used to ensure that parking spaces are available for potential shoppers/customers and tourists, with the resultant economic benefits. Priority will also be given to residents, to enable them to park near their home, within residential areas. It is proposed that the central area of the town will be divided into parking zones. Seaside Road is in the proposed Central Parking Zone, covering the town centre and adjacent streets. The Council will be establishing a working group of Members, Borough and County highway officers, resident's representatives, businesses groups (TCMI, Chamber of Commerce, local traders), transport groups and the Police. The Group will discuss how the parking regime for the area will work in detail, considering such options as pay and display, vouchers, residents permits, visitor permits etc. It is proposed that the working group will then select favoured options for wider public consultation, incorporating a full letter drop and exhibitions.

5. Proposed new parking scheme for Seaside Road

a) Customer parking

Seaside Road is a commercial street, with the main retail area being concentrated in the stretch between Terminus Road and Cavendish Place. There are a wide range of shops, bars and restaurants on the street. It is important for the viability of the businesses that their customers are able to obtain easy access to the goods and services that they provide. It is accepted that those customers who drive to Seaside Road would probably prefer to park close to the business premises they intend to visit. Therefore, priority will be given to providing customer parking in spaces directly on Seaside Road.

In order to ensure that there is on-street parking provision for customers, a regular turnover of parking spaces needs to be achieved. It is proposed that, during the daytime, on-street parking on Seaside Road (between Terminus Road and Cavendish Place) will be restricted to a maximum of one hour's duration. One hour parking restrictions will also be provided on the southern end of Susan's Road.

b) Deliveries

The ability of businesses to be able to receive and send deliveries during the day is also an important factor. At present, it is often difficult to find a parking space big enough to take a large van or lorry. Delivery vehicles sometimes park in inappropriate locations, causing congestion and potential road safety problems. Therefore, it is proposed to provide specific loading bays on Seaside Road to provide for loading and unloading for the local businesses.

Three designated loading bays will be provided on Seaside Road, between Terminus Road and Cavendish Place, for use by the local businesses. There will also be new loading restrictions on the parts of Seaside Road being narrowed to prevent loading and unloading from causing traffic congestion.

c) Parking for traders

At present, traders can park in spaces on Seaside Road during shop opening hours. Under the new scheme, parking priority is being given to potential customers. Therefore, traders may have to look for parking spaces away from the Seaside Road frontage. The Council will try to provide alternative parking options for traders in the immediate vicinity of Seaside Road.

The Council will seek to provide traders on Seaside Road with parking options in the adjacent residential streets, or possibly at the Trinity Place NCP multi-storey car park (subject to agreement with the owners), as an alternative to parking on Seaside Road. These parking areas will be within walking distance of the shops and restaurants on Seaside Road.

d) Parking for disabled badge holders.

At present, there is no specific provision for disabled badge holders to park in the Seaside Road area. It is proposed to make provision in the new scheme.

Three disabled parking bays are to be provided near the junction of Seaside Road and Terminus Road (near T.J.Hughes). There will be a parking restriction of two hours on these spaces.

e) Parking for local residents

It is considered that, where possible, local residents should be provided with an opportunity to park their vehicle close to their home.

Although residents of Seaside Road will not be able to park directly on the street, during the daytime, opportunities will be provided for them to park in adjacent residential streets, within the Town Centre parking zone. Alternatively, they may also be able to use the Trinity Place NCP multi-storey car park (subject to agreement with the owner). All of these parking areas will be within walking distance of the residential units on Seaside Road.

g) Coach parking/loading provision at The Hippodrome Theatre

_At present, there is severe congestion on Seaside Road when up to 10 coaches arrive outside The Hippodrome Theatre, prior to a performance. Theatre companies also have problems in loading and unloading props and costumes as there is no dedicated loading area near the theatre.

A dedicated coach drop-off point/loading bay will be provided to the front of the Hippodrome Theatre, on Seaside Road.

6. Public consultation

It is proposed that the designs for the street improvements on Seaside Road will be available for public comment in October 2002.