

Town Clerk: Hazel Catt

Telephone: 01928 735150

Email: council@frodsham.gov.uk

Website: www.frodsham.gov.uk

Frodsham Town Council

Castle Park, Frodsham,
Cheshire WA6 6SB



To: Parking Services
Cheshire West and Chester Council
4 Civic Way
Ellesmere Port
Cheshire
CH65 0BE

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REPORT OF THE FRODSHAM TOWN COUNCIL PARKING CONSULTATION: SUBMISSION TO THE CWAC PARKING STRATEGY CONSULTATION

Parking has been a concerning issue in Frodsham for some time and has become a more critical concern with the decision to re-open the Halton Curve to provide direct rail services to Liverpool.

In March and April 2016 Councillor Mallie Poulton (Frodsham Town Council, Waterside Ward) carried out a public consultation on parking issues in Frodsham. Three public meetings* were held and there was input from two primary schools (Weaver Vale and St Luke's). The public meetings attracted attendance from business owners, commuters, residents and Councillors from Frodsham, Helsby and surrounding villages.

As CWaC subsequently launched a borough wide consultation on parking, the findings of the Frodsham consultation have been collated to broadly follow the format of the CWaC questionnaire.

Please ensure these findings are taken fully into account in analysing the findings of the borough wide consultation.

Please note, the responses in this report focus primarily on Frodsham and to some extent on similar issues in Helsby. It does not offer comments on parking in any other parts of the borough. Please accept this response on behalf of Frodsham. Although some comments touch on parking problems in Helsby it should not be seen as a submission on behalf of Helsby Parish Council.

Councillor Mallie Poulton

Mayor of Frodsham

* Public meetings

22 March	40 attendees, primarily business owners
11 April	35 attendees, residents, businesses and commuters
26 April	27 attendees, primarily commuters

Issue 1 - Off-street parking (car parks)

There are significant (car park) parking pressures in both Frodsham and Helsby.

Issue 2 - Station Parking

The CWaC owned 'Station Car Park' in Frodsham is a town centre asset and is not for the exclusive use of rail commuters. The very small Network Rail car park is located on the other side of the station and is far from adequate to serve commuter needs.

In car parks that serve Frodsham and Helsby stations, and are located in or near the town/village centre, there is evidence that commuter parking is displacing visitor and customer parking, and so negatively affecting local businesses. In some cases a large majority of people are parking for periods of 9 or more hours on weekdays.

Commuters drive in from much further afield to take advantage of free parking.

There was also concern that people going on holiday abuse the free parking. Once the Halton Curve provides direct trains to Liverpool Airport this could be more prevalent.

Removal of the derelict goods shed and relocation of the recycling centre would allow more parking and would have the potential to make space for a multi-storey car park.

There is land adjacent to the Medical Centre that could be used for parking, although as it is surrounded by residential properties it is not ideal.

There is a whole swathe of land between Main Street and the M56 motorway that offers potential for parking, provided adequate access could be established. This would be less invasive than a multi-storey car park at the station.

Issue 3 - Car Park Quality

The CWaC owned 'Station Car Park' is poorly laid out and poorly lit. It is not clear where the car park boundary is. Part is laid out, part is rough land. Improved car park layout, signage and lighting would be welcomed. More people now choose to drive very large vehicles that are too big for standard size parking bays.

The car park at the Medical Centre is not sufficiently controlled. People frequently park and leave their cars in the 'Drop Off' zone. The regular library delivery vehicles also park in the drop off zone. It needs to be made clear that it is intend only to be used for a matter of minutes to drop off/pick up people.

Issue 4 - Car Park Technology

There were mixed views on using technology. The technologically minded people would appreciate the ability to pay by phone/online etc, while the non-technologically minded people want a simple cash payment machine. So technology is acceptable provided there is a range of alternatives.

Issue 5 – Car Parks – Disabled Parking Provision

The number of spaces are broadly acceptable, however the location of the disabled bays in the CWaC owned 'Station Car Park' are badly placed. For visitors to the town the only way to access the town centre is via two sets of steps (Collinson Court or behind the recycling centre) or through the unpaved car park entrance round a blind bend.

For commuters the disabled bays are not near the platform entrance.

Issue 6 – Car Parks – Motorcycle Parking

This was not raised as an issue at any of the meetings

Issue 7 - Car Parks - Cycle Parking

CWaC has invested a considerable amount of public funds on providing bike racks throughout the town, unfortunately they are not used.

Some commuters thought it would be a good idea to provide bicycle lockers at the station.

Issue 8 - Car Parks - Parent and Child Spaces

There were no strong views from the meetings on parent and child parking. Where it is provided in private car parks e.g. supermarkets the main view related to misuse and failure to police it.

Issue 9 – Introduction of modest charges in some locations

There was a fair amount of support for reasonable parking charges. A sliding scale of charges were the preferred option –

free parking – some thought for 2 hours, others thought 4 hours

small charge for exceeding the free time limit,

all day parking – no more than £5.

Issue 10 – Prioritising short stay parking in some locations

There was considerable support for short stay car parking on Main Street, Frodsham and for PART of the CWaC owned 'Station Car Park' to be reserved for short stay parking.

Issue 11 – Blue Badge Parking Charges

This issue was not raised or discussed, however, as a Council we would not want to impose further restrictions on local residents. Their blue badge generally restricts them to 4 hours parking in a disabled bay. Disabled residents tend to be on low incomes and there are limited public transport options for them. Imposing parking charges would be a step too far.

Issue 12 – Initiatives to support local businesses

There was support for local initiatives. Parking pressures in Frodsham tend to be day time Monday to Friday, not evenings and weekends. The options that would seem to suit Frodsham are:-

'Shoppers' paradise' - special 4 hour offer for those arriving after 10am

'Spend and save' – parking charges refunded or part-paid by participating retailers

There are currently no Park and Ride facilities in Frodsham and Helsby although there was some support for introducing it.

Issue 13 - On-street parking restrictions

There was strong support for time restrictions during the day on Main Street, Frodsham for parking bays other than the disabled bays. Any such system would have to take account of Main Street residents and the Thursday street market. Time restrictions should also apply to business owners

It was strongly felt that parking bays should be marked out along Main Street to stop drivers parking badly and taking too much space.

Measures are also needed to deal with double parking by people who are too lazy to find a parking space.

Issue 14 - New restrictions and potential displacement of parking into residential areas

There was support for new reasonable restrictions to limit displacement of parking into residential areas. Roads in Frodsham that were particularly highlighted at the meeting – Sandfields, Ship Street and Marsh Lane. Helsby has similar problems on residential roads around Helsby Station.

Issue 15 - On-street disabled parking provision

There is reasonable provision on Main Street, except on market days when half of the bays are suspended to accommodate stalls.

Issue 16 - Other Parking Pressures

Since holding the meetings we have been advised that as part of the Halton Curve project the proposed new station at Beechwood Runcorn is not now going ahead. This will put more pressure on parking facilities in Frodsham.

Other issues raised at the meetings

- Enforcement – there is very little enforcement. This causes great frustration at the blatant disregard to any parking restrictions.

- Parking is not just a town centre problem, it's town wide, particularly at the schools, churches and convenience stores on residential roads.

- Introduce a community bus service around residential areas to reduce the number of people driving into town to shop.

- Set up a Park and Ride service

- Build an extra rail station between Helsby and Frodsham. A local landowner is willing to provide a piece of greenbelt land to site the station and carpark (near Castle Park).

- Consider a town wide residents parking permit scheme

- Consider a bicycle rental scheme for visitors

Any changes to parking provision must take account of:

- the re-opening of the Halton Curve to provide direct train services to Liverpool

- the tolling of the Mersey Gateway bridge – commuters may decide to travel by rail rather than drive.

- provision of a new rail service direct to Leeds