

Edited transcript of an email sent from Phil Burns, LBE head of parking, to Mike Morris, ABF secretary

21 May 2008

Dear Mike,

Sorry for the delay in replying to you on your letter, I have just returned from nine weeks on jury service.

In reply to your letter I have inserted comments below each paragraph below. Hopefully this will cover each item in enough detail for your meeting on 2 June 08, but if you require any further information or would like to discuss any other issues with me, please give me a call.

Loading

Concerns were expressed about the difficulties caused to businesses by the current loading regime.

There are not enough loading bays and some of them are poorly marked. The 'three minute rule' is oppressive. Businesses loading and unloading cannot always demonstrate loading activity when the loading bay is at a distance from the premises concerned. This is a particular problem in Acton High Street, and Churchfield Road. There is a further problem on Saturdays. Many of the loading bays are only available Monday to Friday, yet Saturday is the busiest trading day for many businesses. Loading bays should be available for business use on Saturdays too. There are specific problems in the important Vale business district, the triangle of roads formed by Warple Way, Canham Road, and Stanley Gardens. Parking on the street is currently free and is invariably all taken by 08.00. Loading then becomes impossible for businesses with no drive-in area. This situation is going to get much worse when the huge Factory Quarter residential development is completed.

I have asked Shahid Iqbal, head of highways management, to review the current loading arrangements and consider your proposals.

Signage

Signage to council car parks in Acton is almost non-existent. This puts Acton businesses at a disadvantage since there is no possibility of parking anywhere on the town's chief commercial street Acton High Street. Anyone driving through and seeing a shop they wish to visit thinks that parking is quite impossible and drives on to Ealing where the multi-storey car parks are well signed.

I agree with you that our signage could be improved and we have ordered signs to rectify this; these should be installed within the next two weeks.

Enforcement

Acton businesses welcome the news that the Council plans to publish clear 'rules of engagement' setting out exactly what is allowed and what is not. However there is a widespread belief that the wardens operating in Acton are not sufficiently well trained and often do not themselves know what the rules are. They seem to operate a policy of 'if in doubt, give it a ticket'. There is a general feeling that over-zealous enforcement is squeezing the commercial life out of the town. A view was also expressed that some wardens are less than impartial and have over-friendly relations with certain businesses. We welcome your assurance that any such behaviour is not condoned.

We will be consulting on our Code of Practice over the next three months. This code includes clear enforcement procedures that the public can have ready access to; our aim is to be completely transparent and to take on board the findings of the consultation. Our civil enforcement officers (formerly parking attendants) are trained to NVQ standards and we do closely monitor the quality of the enforcement carried out. We currently have to cancel only 0.01% of PCN issued incorrectly as a result of CEO error; admittedly any mistake causes inconvenience and we continue to work to eliminate all of these.

The Council does not set out to issue thousands of PCN; our aim is to improve compliance by fair and reasonable enforcement as set out in the draft Code of Practice.

Residential v business

While shopping customers struggle to find somewhere to park during the working day, residential spaces lie unused in the residential streets immediately adjacent to the High Street and Churchfield Road. It would be a big help to businesses if some of these residential bays could be converted to dual use. 'Stop and shop' bays should be available on to Saturdays to help customers use the shops on the most important business day of the week.

Dual use bays are being considered in residential permit spaces and, again, I have asked Shahid Iqbal to consider your proposals.

Electrical vehicle charging points

Some businesses have expressed an interest in using electrical vehicles for deliveries and welcome your news that the Council is looking at the possibility of on-street charging points.

We are investigating electric charging points and plan to trial these at specific locations around the borough in due course. There are some safety concerns to be overcome, mainly around trailing wires and the location of these charging points, but I am

confident that these can be resolved. If you have any specific locations in mind for charging points I am happy to have these considered.

Philip Burns
Head of Parking