

**ABG/20379 – Christ’s Hospital of Abingdon  
Erection of Residents Permit Parking Signs (6 Entry Signs and 11 Repeater  
Signs)  
Park Road and Park Crescent, Abingdon OX14 1DA**

**1.0 The Proposal**

- 1.1 Park Road and Park Crescent in Abingdon are private roads owned and maintained by Christ’s Hospital of Abingdon. Christ’s Hospital wishes to introduce on-street parking control in these two streets to prohibit vehicles that are not connected with either the dwellings or St Michael’s Church. This application is to display the signage for this parking control scheme.
- 1.2 A total of 17 signs are proposed, of which 6 would be signs announcing entry to the control zone and 11 would be “repeater” signs set at a frequency considered necessary to prevent successful legal challenge to any parking fine. The entry signs would measure 610mm x 460mm and the repeater signs would be 297mm x 201mm. Both types of sign would have a dark green background and cream lettering. Only 2 of the signs would require new street furniture in the form of new metal posts – 14 would go onto existing posts or lamp-posts, and 1 would go onto a stone pillar at the entrance to Albert Park. The signs would not be illuminated. The detail of the signs and their proposed locations in Park Road and Park Crescent are shown in **Appendix 1**.
- 1.3 The applicant’s supporting statement for the application is contained in **Appendix 2**. Christ’s Hospital is concerned about the amount of on-street parking, much of which it considers is not related to residents or the Church, and the resulting potential for damage to the character and appearance of the area (through the appearance of parked cars and through cars damaging the un-kerbed grass verges). Park Road and Park Crescent lie within the Albert Park Conservation Area.
- 1.4 To be able to successfully enforce a parking control scheme requires warning signage to be installed. Expert advice given to the applicant is that the signs have to be no more than a certain distance apart to prevent a driver making a successful challenge to prosecution on the grounds of ignorance of the scheme. The number and frequency of the proposed signs has been driven by this advice.
- 1.5 The application has been amended from its original form. Two signs proposed within Albert Park have been deleted from the application. Originally a pair of entry signs were proposed at the top of Conduit Road and Victoria Road, but a single sign is now proposed at each of these locations. The background colour of all the proposed signs has also been changed from bright green to dark green.
- 1.6 The application comes to Committee at the request of both Local Members, Councillors Richard Gibson and Jim Halliday.

**2.0 Planning History**

- 2.1 There is no history that is relevant to this application

**3.0 Planning Policies**

3.1 Signage applications are determined under the Town & Country Planning (Control of Advertisement) Regulations 2007. There are only two material considerations for applications for signage – the impact of the signs on visual amenity, in particular the potential for the signs to cause a distraction or obstruction which would compromise highway safety and the impact on public safety.

3.2 The relevant policies of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 are DC15 and DC18 which state that an application for a sign in a Conservation Area will not be given consent if, in combination with other existing signage, it would harm the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, or create a highway hazard.

#### 4.0 **Consultations**

4.1 Abingdon Town Council – does not object “subject to the District Council’s Conservation Officer’s approval – have automatic barriers at the entrance to the area been considered?”

4.2 County Engineer has no objection to the signs on the grounds of highway safety and confirms the County Highways Authority has no objection to the use of lamp-posts for the signage.

4.3 English Heritage – does not object but has made comments on the proposal which are in **Appendix 3**.

4.4 Local Residents and Other Parties – 64 letters of objection and 18 letters of support have been submitted. The grounds for objection are:-

- I. The proposed signage is excessive and will harm the special character and appearance of the Park and its setting
- II. The harm arising from signage and parking within the Park itself
- III. Worshippers and people attending other events at St Michael’s Church will be prevented from parking – the suggested arrangements to cater for Church events will not work
- IV. The parking problem has been exaggerated and is largely confined to that part of Park Road east of Conduit Road – the proposal should be more focussed
- V. Parking problems are largely caused by Abingdon School and should be resolved by the School rather than by wider parking controls
- VI. The proposed controls are “draconian” – time-limited parking would be better
- VII. Parking will be displaced to surrounding streets which are already heavily congested due to lack of off-street parking
- VIII. The “drop-and-go” feature will increase the use of cars by parents of boys at Abingdon School
- IX. Drivers “touring” to look for a space will cause highway danger
- X. Any specific illumination of the signs will be harmful
- XI. The proposal is contrary to the expressed view of a meeting of the Albert Park Residents Association
- XII. The clamping of cars and towing them away is more akin to a character of a city street than the Albert Park Conservation Area

#### 5.0 **Officer Comments**

5.1 The material considerations relevant to this application are narrowly focussed because it is an application under the Advertisement Regulations. These regulations only allow

two material considerations to be assessed – the visual impact of the proposed signage on the amenity of the area, and the potential harm to highway safety resulting from any potential distraction caused by the signage.

5.2 Therefore many of the grounds of objection that have been expressed are not material to the application. For clarity, the following objections are not material:-

- The mechanics of the proposed parking controls (ie whether it is by permit controlled through clamping, or whether some other method is used)
- The impact of the proposed controls on events at St Michael's Church
- The potential for displacement of parking to other streets
- The potential touring of drivers waiting for spaces

5.3 The mechanics of the proposed controls are a matter for Christ's Hospital and the affected parties. The fact that Park Road and Park Crescent are not a public highway, but private roads, gives Christ's Hospital the legal right to impose parking controls if it sees fit to do so and to choose what type of parking scheme to operate. These matters are outside the control of the District Council.

5.4 Members essentially are being asked to consider only the visual appearance and highway safety implications of the proposed signs in their context, which is the Albert Park Conservation Area. Officers consider the amendments that have been made to the application are significant. In this regard, there are now single entry signs proposed at every entry point (as opposed to double signs at some points which would have created clutter) and the proposed signage within the Park has been deleted. The proposed dark green background colour for the signs is considered much more sympathetic to the Victorian character of the area.

5.5 Only two of the signs will require new street furniture. The photo-montages submitted by the applicants support their contention that the proposed signage will be relatively subdued in size and impact. Consequently, Officers consider that the proposal as amended does not cause harm to the visual amenity of the area and, as such, does not harm the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

5.6 The highway safety aspect solely relates to the potential distraction of the signs themselves and not to any other highway safety issues. The County Engineer has carefully considered the application and does not consider that any danger from distraction will arise. Consequently, he does not object to the application.

5.7 English Heritage has suggested a review period for the signage, after which the number of signs could be reduced if felt necessary. Officers consider that there is sufficient information about the signs to make a permanent decision. In any event, the applicants have stated that the proposal represents the minimum number of signs that can be used for the scheme to be effective. Once the signs are installed, Officers consider it would be difficult to reduce them in number.

## 6.0 **Recommendation**

6.1 *That Advertisement Consent is granted subject to Standard Conditions*