

Committee: Cabinet Member Report

Date: 17th April 2023

Agenda item: N/A

Wards: Village

Subject: High Street Wimbledon -Parklet – statutory consultation

Lead officer: Adrian Ash, Interim Director of Environment & Regeneration.

Lead member: Paul McGarry

Forward Plan reference number: N/A

Contact Officer: Mark Warren Mark.Warren@merton.gov.uk

Recommendations:

That the Cabinet Member considers the issues detailed in this report and:

- A) Gives approval to undertake a 21-day statutory consultation to re-introduce a parklet structure outside the restaurant Light on the Common. This would involve the removal of 2 pay and display parking bays as shown on plan attached in appendix 1.
- B) Agrees to exercise his discretion not to hold a public inquiry on the consultation process.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report details the results of the Experimental Traffic Order used in 2021 to suspend 2 existing parking bays to facilitate the implementation of a parklet structure outside the restaurant Light on the Common which has since been removed. The parklet was used to support the local restaurant by providing additional outdoor seating.
- 1.2. Due to ongoing support, this report seeks approval to undertake a new statutory consultation to accommodate a new parklet at exactly the same location as previous parklet.

2. DETAILS

- 2.1. Parklets are temporary structures and planters that typically occupy carriageway or footway space; they provide additional space for outside seating. To support the hospitality sector to recover from COVID-19 restrictions, Future Merton implemented eight parklets supported by Government grants; 5 of the parklets including this one were directly associated with an existing local business with suitable sites that wished to extend seating areas onto the public highway.
- 2.2. Parklets are part of Merton's commitment in supporting economic recovery, and also contribute to improved air quality and biodiversity, vibrancy and sense of place as well as reducing vehicle dominance on the street.
- 2.3. This parklet was implemented in June 2021 using an Experimental Traffic Order which allowed the parklet to be installed and to assess the effects before making a final decision in terms of its retention. The consultation resulted in 20 representations (with majority support)

which have been detailed in appendix 2; however, since the Experimental Order is no longer valid, and a decision to retain the parklet is not being made at stage, the objections are no longer relevant but are detailed in this report for information only. It is, however, worth noting that there is continued support from the business owner.

- 2.4. Due to some improvement works to the restaurant, in May 2022 the structure was removed with the intension of replacing it on a later date. Since then, the Experimental Order has expired and in order to facilitate the new parklet, it is necessary to undertake a 21-day statutory consultation to permanently remove the 2 parking bays and install the parklet structure.



3. OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1. The parklets are aligned with many borough priorities such as improving the appearance and experience of town centers, high streets and local parades; improving levels of biodiversity and air quality and assist the local business with their recovery. It is considered that the social and economic benefits the parklet outweigh the loss of 2 parking spaces particularly when there are ample of other available spaces in the area such as along Southside Common.
- 3.2. Due to the continued support, it is recommended that approval is given to undertake the required statutory consultation to remove the 2 pay and display parking bays and install a new parklet as shown on plan in appendix 1.
- 3.3. The consultation will include posting a newsletter to the frontages; the erection of street notices on lamp columns in the vicinity of the proposal; publication in the local papers and the London Gazette. The information will also be available on the Council's website.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1. Not to reintroduce the parklet. Although this may satisfy those who believe parking bays are a priority, it would be against the Council's objectives in supporting the local business and it would be against the wishes of the business and its customers who had previously enjoyed the benefits.

5. TIMETABLE

- 5.1. The statutory consultation will be carried out soon after a decision is made.

6. FINANCIAL RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The costs associated with this parklet will be fully funded by the business.

7. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The Traffic Management Orders would be made under Section 6 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended). The Council is required by the Local Authorities Traffic Order (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 to give notice of its intention to make a Traffic Order (by publishing a draft traffic order). These regulations also require the Council to consider any representations received as a result of publishing the experimental order.
- 7.2. The Council has discretion as to whether or not to hold a public inquiry before deciding whether or not to make a traffic management order. A public inquiry should be held where it would provide further information, which would assist the Council in reaching a decision.
- 7.3. The Council's powers to make Traffic Management Orders arise mainly under sections 6, 45, 46, 122 and 124 and schedules 1 and 9 of the RTRA 1984.

8. HUMAN RIGHTS & EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHENSION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. The implementation of any scheme endeavors to meet the needs of all road users and in this case, it has a positive impact particularly on the local business and their patrons.

9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Although such structures can be subject to vandalism, in general, since their implementation, there have been any reported incidences or complaints about their use. In this case, the owner of the restaurant will steward the structure.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. Making use of the parklet structure aligns with circular economy principles. They provide a calming and greenery effect on the roadside environment.
- 10.2. The additional planting provided by the parklets improve levels of biodiversity and greening on these sites.

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1. The following documents are to be published with this report.
Appendix 1 – plan
Appendix 2 – Representations to expired Experimental Order

Appendix 1 – Plan



Wimbledon Village High Street, outside Light on the Common

Q. Do you support the introduction of the parklet?

Response	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Yes	10	60%
No	6	20%
Unsure	4	20%
Total	20	100.0%

Respondents' comments

(note: not all respondents provided comments)

Respondents' comments
Initiatives like this are essential to the survival of the hospitality market
It is great idea and support for the underprivileged businesses. Thank you for it
This is an excellent plan and more would be good as we go towards a greener less congested future.
Excellent idea to create a further, small eat-outside non-traffic area
Wimbledon Village hospitality needs to recover. I am fully supportive. I would welcome additional parklets - for example on the high street in front of Hemmingways (which might mean that patrons didn't go around the corner into Lancaster), in the corners outside Carluccios and / or Giggling Squid. I do not support it where it would impede traffic on a major road but do think that around Light on the Common is a good experiment.
I actually think it is quite ugly and no way a reflection of the town centre, it's tacky and trashy looking, never once have I seen anyone using it
In theory, but the parklet actually occupies more than the two parking spaces as designated, and which are very much needed. It is not possible to park in the space next to the parklet outside 50-51 if a second car is parked in the space next to the loading bay. The same problem occurs at the Common end of the parklet. No allowance for manouevering. Therefore 4 spaces are occupied by the parklet. Not as designed.
Parklets are both an unfair use of public money, in that the amount to state aid for the selected few businesses that have them located outside as free additional seating, whilst others do not benefit in the same way and also, you're seeking to locate ugly and necessary 'parklets' within a very short walk of one of the largest actual parks in London. Can we assume that any business using these godawful parklets will be charged an appropriate rental cost for their free infrastructure?
Parklets are ridiculous ideas, waste of money & space - And this one is literally a few hundred metres from one of the biggest green spaces in London (Wimbledon Common) - You couldnt make this kind of nonsense up!
The whole area/street that leads to the Rushmere end of the Common should be made permanently traffic free. At the same time, it is reprehensible of the council to allow restaurants and cafes to take up so much of the pavement on the Village's main high street; this forces pedestrians on to the road to avoid tables, chairs and other pedestrians, resulting in the risk of being hit by a passing car. Pavements are for pedestrians, not for cafes and restaurants and their big signs that also are allowed to take up space on the pavement. At busy times, traffic should be diverted completely from the Village high street; it is an area I avoid at weekends due to the high traffic, high level of pollution from car fumes, crowds of people and the difficulty in getting past people on the pavement due to spillage from the cafes and restaurants

There are plenty of parks and places to go in the area. Parklets are a complete waste of money and are only there to block parking. There is no justification for these hideous things to exist and no possible gain from them.

While I understand Merton's desire to support businesses, it seems this could favour the hospitality trade at the expense of other businesses. People are not going to visit the new grocery /deli shops if they have to carry heavy shopping a long way to their car (assuming they are unable to use public transport etc to reach location), and be deterred from popping to other shops if it's too difficult or inconvenient. I am also concerned about impact of pavement seating people with disabilities or who have to navigate with a guide dog.

These schemes should be introduced after a consultation not before. I object to any measures which:
1. Make walking through the village more of an obstacle course by reducing pavement access, 2. Limit the through flow of traffic. We LIVE here and do not need any more inconvenience, 3. It is wrong to classify the Village as an eating and drinking locality. There are plenty of other businesses and a greater variety of businesses should be encouraged. 4. Reduced parking facilities in the village will lead to greater parking pressures in nearby roads such as Leeward Gardens.

The section of High Street east of Lingfield Road should be permanently closed to create a pedestrianized square for the area.

A parklet is a space which is open to all. This seems more like a private facility for the restaurant. It is an improvement over car parking but it should not be called by some other name.

I wonder whether there will be an opportunity to provide feedback on the pavement licences? Although it's a wonderful idea to help businesses that have struggled during the pandemic, it means that pedestrians trying to get through the area with things like wheelchairs or prams are finding there is less space than ever before. If the parklets are successful, could businesses extend their space there rather than on the pavement?

Welcome this use of the public highway for people and trade and local character, not parked cars. Need to respect the privacy of the two small houses adjoining, by eg putting raised planters on pavement to dissuade people congregating there? Can we now hope that this is a step towards a permanent semi-pedestrianisation scheme that has only limited vehicular access from the west to serve premises, and has no vehicular access from the main section of the High Street? A true "parklet" with more trees. And that tells drivers back at say the Copse Hill roundabout that there is no through route to the Village High Street, and ditto at the junction with Southside? If loss of parking is seen as an issue for traders, then consider changing the four existing parking spaces nearby in Lingfield Road from "shared" (both visitors and residents) to visitors only?