

# Residents criticise lack of engagement in council's Saughtonhall parking consultation

A former Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh, Norman Irons and his wife, Anne, claim that the council consultation on introducing parking charges in Saughtonhall has excluded them and hundreds of others in the area.

The consultation has largely been run online which means that many elderly residents such as Dr and Mrs Irons feel left out. Even the council leaflet referred residents to an online map to complete the information provided. However the council has countered by saying that anyone responding to a consultation can request a paper copy of the consultation and submit that by post. Anyone doing so will be included in terms of representation.

An online [petition](#) against the measures has attracted almost 400 signatures. It asks for locals to resist the council's heavy-handed attitude in introducing what they say are unnecessary parking zones in Saughtonhall and Balgreen. Those behind the petition regard this proposal simply as a council money-making scheme.

Residents say the council ran out of leaflets which were to be

distributed in the area, and since these were delivered during the recent snowy weather, many residents say they did not receive any information about the consultation.

The council say that they delivered almost 17,000 leaflets to every single property in the affected areas. In addition they say that every ward councillor and community councils were issued with an email prior to the consultation.

Transport and Environment Convener Councillor Lesley Macinnes said: "This review responds to the concerns of residents across the city, many of whom have told us that they want to see controls introduced to help limit the impact of non-residential parking. As part of this, officers have carried out an in-depth, citywide analysis to identify the areas that may be most in need of restrictions.

"Proposed controls are about helping residents to park near their homes, so of course we want to know what the people who live here think about them. Our suppliers have delivered over 1600 leaflets in the Saughtonhall area to try to reach every property in this area and around 17000 as part of this phase of wider consultation. We also have physical copies of the surveys available for those that may need them.

"Unfortunately, due to the ongoing COVID pandemic we've been unable to hold the kind of face-to-face meetings we usually would for a consultation of this kind, though we have made the best use of technology to carry out this engagement virtually."

## **STRATEGIC REVIEW**

The possibility of implementing parking charges in Saughtonhall was first discussed in August 2018 when the council agreed a Strategic Review of parking in the whole city. The council was about to begin the consultation in April 2020, but put the process on hold when lockdown began. It then

decided to proceed this spring with online drop-in sessions and leaflets sent out by post since face to face meetings is still not possible.

Murrayfield Community Council commented that while they are largely supportive of the plans, they were aware of the problems in some leaflets not being delivered, and that certain aspects of the leaflet were incorrect. For example, some privately owned spaces at Roseburn Maltings are marked as shared use spaces. The community council supports a blanket CPZ over the area as this would avoid some streets becoming a car park. But, they warn against using a one-size-fits-all approach. They said that except for residents around the Balgreen tram stop there is little support in the Saughtonhall area "with its quiet residential enclaves".

Daughter of the former Lord Provost, Elizabeth Irons, told The Edinburgh Reporter: "My elderly parents live in Saughtonhall, one of the proposed CPZ areas. They were only recently made aware of this by a neighbour and had received no information. They subsequently checked with a number of neighbours and they were also unaware of this consultation. To date we are only aware of one neighbour who has received the leaflet.

"It is simply unacceptable that the Council will conclude a consultation and implement changes without ensuring that all those affected have an opportunity to review plans and provide input.

"Furthermore, how can the parking needs be properly assessed during Covid-19 – people's movements are totally different at the moment due to restrictions?

"I emailed the parking consultation email along with Councillors strongly suggesting that the consultation needs to be extended on the basis that they had not properly consulted. If people aren't aware of proposals or cannot access the details of this, then it is simply not a consultation. I

didn't even receive the courtesy of a response from the body organising the consultation.

"While my parents and their neighbours have tried to contact as many residents as they can, these proposed changes affect thousands of households and it is not possible, nor is it their responsibility to contact everyone. These proposed changes affect thousands of people in the Saughtonhall area – the consultation leaflet needs to be delivered to every household and the consultation extended to allow people the opportunity to respond.

"In addition, having reviewed the leaflet, it provides no substantive information on the proposed changes (simply a dotted line around the proposed CPZ area) and directs people to go online to look at an interactive map. There are many older people in our local community who have limited, if any, access to the internet or are sufficiently proficient to be able to navigate the site (my parents being an example of this) or would be able to join a Microsoft Teams online meeting."

Local councillor and current Lord Provost Cllr Frank Ross told us: "I don't have any numbers for those that have responded to the consult but my in box has been in overdrive.

"Overwhelmingly in the Corstorphine, Saughtonhall, Murrayfield and even in the Maltings at Roseburn there has been a negative reaction to the CPZ proposals. Not least because people aren't being asked if they want a CPZ the basic assumption of the consultation is that controls are happening. "The vast majority feel that the Council proposals are heavy handed and there is no clear understanding of what problem they are meant to be solving. Saughtonhall residents almost unanimously see no need for controls."

The council wants to introduce parking charges in Saughtonhall as well as Easter Road, an area which they called West Leith, Bonnington, Willowbrae North, Murrayfield, Corstorphine and

Roseburn. They say this will deal with increased complaints by residents about people from outside the area parking their cars in residential streets and then presumably commuting into the city centre. This means there is little on street parking for residents. The council looked at parking pressures in the whole city, including satellite towns and villages taking what they call a “strategic proactive approach to address parking pressures”.

The recent consultation was undertaken after the review and in particular areas where the council propose introducing parking controls, and the consultation ended on 14 March 2021.



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Local resident Dave Dawson (67) who lives on Baird Grove recognised that many people had not received a leaflet so he produced his own and distributed it to his neighbours. He explained in the leaflet that he believed one Microsoft Teams meeting to discuss the proposals was attended by only 14 people, leaving those living there bewildered at the lack of consultation.

Mr Dawson said: "We are lucky as in our street most, most of the houses have a driveway. I park my car in the driveway anyway. But we have a daughter and a granddaughter who visit us regularly. And it would mean that I would have to take our parking permit in the street as well so that when she arrived, I would have to move my car into the street to let my daughter park in the drive. I think that's the first and obvious thing if we get to that stage.

"For workmen coming to the house, or other friends or family, as I know happens in other parts of the city, we're well aware of that – we'd have to buy tickets for friends or family to use. So there is a financial cost to everybody.

"And to be honest, this looks to me and to most of my neighbours as a moneymaking cash cow by the council. And quite frankly, if they wanted to raise more money and raise extra revenue, I'd rather pay more council tax than go through this procedure.

"The only time we have a busy street with parking is when there's an event on a Murrayfield or at Tynecastle. And I would have to say the vast majority of people who come and park in our street at that time are very courteous, very respectful of property, they respect the white lines, they don't double park over drives or anything. But every other time when it's a normal day, in the street we do not have any

issues at all with parking. I can understand that there are issues closer to the tram stop and Western Corner, the bus stop up there. I believe there are people who park and then commute into town. I would sympathise with people who are closer to there. But in this particular street, it's not never been an issue but apart from the events I've described.

"I've spoken to a few neighbours about it, and then in response to a lot of people looking at me blankly, I produced my own leaflet, which I sent out to them. And I would have to say that if you don't know about something you can't reply to it. I would also have to say that a lot of our neighbours round about here now are elderly. They might not have internet access, or if they can, they certainly aren't experts in finding their way around an interactive map, which the council put out. The consultation exercise for me has been very, very flawed and the assumption that the cars which are parked during a pandemic are commuters going to work seems to me to be deeply flawed as well."

The council has confirmed that 83 people attended the two Saughtonhall meetings on Teams.

Local MP Christine Jardine said: "It's clear from my correspondence that a great number of people are dissatisfied with the way this is being handled particularly in Saughtonhall where not everyone seems to have received the same correspondence about the proposals.

"The general reaction to then proposals varies from area to area and I would hope that the council will take this into account.

"I've raised this directly with the council and will pass on all the comments I receive, but I would also stress that people should make individual contributions to ensure that the widest possible response is provided.

"For the consultation to be fair there needed to be

traditional, non-online options to ensure that no residents are excluded particularly at the moment when there is no access to community online facilities provided by libraries.

“This is yet another botched consultation by the SNP-run Council who need to do more to ensure that the public’s views are taken into account and reflected in the final proposals.”