

Comment – who wants controlled parking in Gorgie?

Controlled parking is coming to Gorgie.

I'm writing less than two weeks before the 23 October 'live date' for Controlled Parking Zone S6(E), which runs from McLeod Street to Robertson Avenue and takes in all the streets of densely populated tenements in between.

Those tenements are now dominated by private landlords and an increasingly transient population. Those streets are the most fly-tipped in Edinburgh, and suffer from substandard street cleansing and daily struggles with communal waste. Small businesses on Gorgie Road are struggling to make ends meet, evidenced by the high turnover of shops and compounded by a recent spate of break-ins and vandalism, thought to be related to an increase in drug dealing.

Understandably, relations between residents and the Council are fraught. "The Council doesn't give a damn about the likes of us", says one Wardlaw Place resident, who has lived in the area for over half a century. "They just want money to buy their toys: trams, hotels, cycle lanes. They want more money from us to buy those things while they leave this place to rot – just look at the state of Gorgie Farm".

This resident has received no contact from the Council in relation to the CPZ. She has heard about the 'Live Date' through word of mouth and is worried about how her son will park when he comes round on Tuesday afternoon to assist her with food shopping. She's heard that he will need a 'visitor permit' to park on the street, but she has no idea how to go about applying for one.

In 2023 there have been substantial changes in this part of Gorgie, with the introduction of 'bin hubs' earlier in the year and now the works to install the Controlled Parking Zone. There are definitely upsides to these changes: communal bins are now contained away from the pavements and controlled parking will improve access for bin lorries. But public realm improvements have not come in alongside the projects; a deep layer of filth runs along the kerb of every side street, and mini middens have been left to accumulate around some bins. Reports of vermin continue, drains are blocked, the road surfaces are some of the worst in the city – and that's saying something.

Gorgie residents have learned to live with this level of neglect, it's not new. What is new is that the Council has now got the brass neck to rock up and request payment for the right to park on their dilapidated streets. For many, it's a step too far.

Another resident I spoke to lives in a housing association flat on Newton Street. His mobility is impaired, and he only uses his car for weekend visits to family in West Lothian. "It's just a money-making exercise for the Council", he says, visibly angry. "This is an area of deprivation in a cost of living crisis and they're coming here to take money off us, while the services they provide get worse. I can't afford to shell out £150 for a permit, and if I choose to pay quarterly it'll cost £50 extra over the year. That's just punishing people for being poor".

Many of my constituents have pointed out that while Gorgie is getting a fully-fledged Controlled Parking Zone, residents in wealthy parts of the city, such as Murrayfield and the Grange, continue to benefit from a system of 'Priority Parking', where the restricted times are shorter and permits cost around a quarter of the price. This inequity feeds into a broader feeling in the area that the Council does more for wealthier parts of the city. If that feeling is not quite borne out in the '[Strategic Parking Review](#)', which will likely result in an ongoing expansion of Controlled Parking Zones across the city, it is obvious to anyone who takes a cursory look at the streets and green spaces in Gorgie and compares them to their equivalents in Stockbridge or Morningside.

And it's obvious when you hear the howls from Corstorphine and Craiglockhart about changes happening in those areas, that some voices in the city are louder than others, and Council resources sometimes follow the din.

In many ways, Gorgie/Dalry should be fertile ground for many of the changes the Council wants to make in relation to transport and environment. The [2011 Census](#) showed that less than 38% of Gorgie/Dalry households had access to a car, compared to an Edinburgh-wide figure of over 60%. For households with multiple cars, the gap is even wider – just 4.7% of Gorgie/Dalry households had more than one car compared to an Edinburgh-wide 17.2%. Given the changing demographics of the area, I expect the results of the 2022 Census will show that car ownership will have reduced even further over the past decade.

In this context, the Council's [City Mobility Plan](#), Circulation Plan and the 2030 target of reducing car use by 30% all stand to benefit Gorgie/Dalry residents more than most. In those plans, Gorgie Road is identified as a priority for 'place, walking and wheeling': this means improving the street environment, creating better conditions for walking and a safe environment for cycling alongside a reduction in bus journey

times.

I'm fully on board with this vision, which has the potential to help address many of the public realm issues identified above, and I'm ready to champion radical policies in the face of inevitable vocal opposition. But if we're going to take people with us on that journey then communication needs to improve drastically.

That's why I'm so angry about the atrocious communication around the implementation of the Controlled Parking Zone. The letter that confirmed the 'Live Date' and the process for permit application was not delivered to many of the affected residents and businesses. For those who did receive the letter, no information is provided about how to apply offline, no phone number is given, and there is no information about visitor parking. That's just not good enough.

So controlled parking is coming to Gorgie, and there's no stopping that now. But the Council needs to reflect on this botched implementation and change the way we're treating Gorgie residents. We have an administration that loves to talk about 'getting the basics right', but in Gorgie at the moment, the most basic standards of respect and communication are not being met.

Editor: The council advised plans for a CPZ in Gorgie in 2021 – [read more here.](https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/news/article/13086/new-parking-controls-proposed-for-leith-gorgie-and-shandon)
<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/news/article/13086/new-parking-controls-proposed-for-leith-gorgie-and-shandon>

And the council has been asked for comment.



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