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Dear Mr Reed

Re: Controlled Parking Zone Consultation for Canton, Cardiff

Canton Residents Action Committee was formed as a direct response to the implications that a Controlled Parking Zone would have on the impact and the integrity of the community of Canton. During the past few weeks, the members of the committee have canvassed opinions from residents within the Zone, businesses potentially affected by the Zone, and the fallout it will have on the local churches. These three vital elements are key to the integral success of any community.

Outlined below are comments and questions that have been raised by the local people in Canton.

Louise Hawkins spoke to Councillor Elgin Morgan outside the public meeting last Thursday (20th April) and he assured her that any response made from residents would be included in the feedback from JPM Consultants, so we are now submitting them directly to you the Consultants and copying them to our the list at the bottom of this letter. The comments are for submission in the actual consultation, and the questions need to be addressed as part of the wider response to the process.

The overriding point is that the whole consultation process has been flawed from start to finish. Canton residents and local business were not truly reflected in the consultation process. Listening to local businesses and residents from other areas of the city, it is apparent they were made part of their local consultation process as far back as June 2005. This luxury has not been afforded to the people of Canton. Information distributed by the Council was vague, in very small print, confusing, and never got its message across as to the direct implications and impact this scheme would have. They asked residents to complete a questionnaire without first making them aware of the facts. The consultants, who are incidentally not from Cardiff, conducted a survey of the area to ascertain the usage of parking in Canton. They based this survey around surveillance between 6am and 7am in the morning. Naturally, at that time, people are going to be at home, as the majority of people will not have left for work. It is farcical that this data can be used, and then conclusions be drawn from such flawed information. Regardless of the conclusions of the consultation, it is the general consensus from the many people with whom we have spoken, that this council needs to go back to the drawing board, and re consult with the people who will be directly affected by the CPZ.

Residents believe this is just another tax on people, and it penalises individuals for having cars, and makes them pay for the privilege. Drivers are over taxed already, by virtue of Road Tax, Petrol, Speeding and existing parking fines to name but a few. It is targeted on four areas of the city; it disadvantages the residents, and is an unfair tax on a sector of the population.

Residents have a right to family life, as outlined in Human Rights legislation. The charging of friends, family and any visitors to residents homes is unacceptable. Many people bought their homes understanding the current issues of parking, and some residents have lived in the area all their lives. To place the onus of this tax on families and friends is wholly offensive.

Further down into Canton, it is broadly accepted that many of the car parks are filled by commuters. These sweeping statements have not been tested by establishing precisely the level of commuters who use these free parking facilities there. Why is there no park and ride system in operation at Leckwith Stadium? Why is there no viable cheap option for people who work in Canton or in Town to utilise public transport via a park and ride subsidised by the Council?

Passers by will no longer stop off to buy from local stores - they simply will not go to the effort of finding a pay and display machine, then display their ticket, merely to pop into a local shop to post a letter, or buy a loaf of bread. And they simply will not risk the possibility of receiving a parking ticket that will cost £60. Subsequently, this will dramatically damage small businesses in the locality.

Parking permit systems are currently in operation in some of the areas that will be affected by the zone. These restrictions were put in place for specific reasons, mainly due to facilities in the area and the chaos that parking causes around these public facilities. Residents who now use a permit system have already expressed their concern, as these streets are not adequately policed by wardens, and are open to abuse. They now have another threat, as these streets will become a free for all for any resident who lives within the zone. Their real concerns need to be addressed. Some streets have as little as 14 parking spaces, and are directly in the middle of the shopping area. Any resident from the zone will naturally use these spaces, rather than pay and display in pay and display zones or car parks.

A number of parking spaces will be lost in each street. This could be due to a number of reasons. The bays will be shorter, there will be dedicated pay only areas at the ends of some streets, or yellow lines will occupy lane endings where currently there are no restrictions. This presently is not the case, and it will dramatically affect residents' ability to park in their own street. It is estimated that well over 400 parking spaces will be lost in the west end of Canton alone. These cars must park somewhere in the evenings, and they will create an overspill to other areas not included in the zone. Some of these restricted pay and display zones will have 8:00 am – 6:30 pm restrictions on them. This is of no use at all to residents who return home from work at 5:00 PM, as they will then still have to pay. The same goes for residents who choose to leave their home after 8:00 am. Again, they will be forced to pay and display. This is another wholly unacceptable aspect of this ill advised scheme.

Canton does not have a parking problem. It merely has an enforcement problem. Councillors Patel and Thomas showed a picture on the front of their recent local publication showing a vehicle parked on a bus stop, saying that this would not happen with CPZ. Well, quite frankly, this should not happen under the current system. Proper enforcement in and around Canton would have a dramatic effect on the current situation.

Local churches have expressed concerns. Many parishioners travel to the church, some of whom are elderly. They need to be able to find parking nearby to enable them to access a facility they have used for most of their lives. Churches operate Girls Brigade,

Boys Brigade, Youth Clubs, Older persons groups, Toddler Groups etc., all of which are essential to the ongoing viability of the church. In a society where the emphasis is on the sanctity of the family, this scheme does very little to encourage upholding family values by disenfranchising people from being able to access their local amenity. Churches have visiting ministers, again another tax on people.

Many local businesses are very small. This parking tax will cause businesses not only to lose staff but find it difficult to employ new staff. If employees have to pay £3 a day to park, that equates to in excess of £700 a year! What criteria will be established to enable businesses to have permits? Who decides on the criteria and who will ultimately decide on which businesses get permits, and which ones don't? How much would permits cost local businesses? We seem to have forgotten that we have relied heavily on small businesses to be there over the years to support local people. Slowly but surely we are dismantling communities, as we force everyone to those charmless out-of-town shopping centres that only profit shareholders of large companies, and we do nothing to sustain the character of what has made our community the vibrant place it is today.

Canton is fortunate to have car parks in the area. These car parks should be made pay and display, with the emphasis on the shopper and the local people, not the commuters that could possibly take advantage of cheap parking. Commuters should be encouraged down to Leckwith Stadium, and the council should operate park and ride facilities, that can enable people to get to and from work during the day. The existing car parks should be looked at. The one in Gray Street and the one that runs between Severn Road and Wyndham Crescent are overlooked mainly by shops. Cardiff Council should explore ways of maximising these spaces. They should either build underground and/or split level parking at these sites, which could at least double the existing provision. A small fee should be charged to park up to 3 hours, and the fee should rise dramatically to ensure that commuters do not park their vehicles there during the day to travel to work. Again, a park and ride should be established to address the needs of commuters.

Central government agenda is to try and get the nation fitter. However, this scheme removes cycle lanes to make way for paid parking zones. This is objectionable. We should be encouraging people to ride to and from their destinations by enforcing the cycle lanes and fining people who park illegally across them. Again, this is not a parking issue, this is an enforcement issue.

The Liberal Democrats, who initially are responsible for implementing this scheme, appear to be changing their tact already in Canton, even though the findings of the consultation has yet to be published. One unelected Liberal Democrat is taking it upon herself to try and get a petition together to split the zone.

The use of a private company to enforce causes grave concern to everyone potentially affected. These companies have one focus, and that is to make money. Horror stories have been told in the media how these schemes have been implemented, and there is no arbitration and the people administering the punitive measures become power crazed and totally abuse their position. Please do not do this to Canton.

We would like to know the number of questionnaires that have been returned. What percentage constitutes "the people of Canton have spoken." The people of Canton would be speaking in a far different voice now if they had to fill in that questionnaire again. They were sold it as a solution to all their parking problems. All this scheme does is create far more problems that it solves.

What happens once the consultation process is finished? Where are the findings reported back to and when? Are local people allowed representation when the consultations feed their findings back? When will this report be published?

The problem with residents parking is simply that. Residents parking when they come home from work at night, and on weekends. Attached are photographs taken at different times during the day, you will see streets are empty. The consultants give a false impression of the situation due to the time of day that they surveyed the area.

Canton councillors have said they will listen to the findings of the consultation if over 35% of the local people return their questionnaires. We challenge the consultation, and again, declare that we believe it to be flawed, whatever its outcome. We urge you to reconsider this process again, and inform the public and empower each individual on whom this scheme impacts to have a say in the way forward that best suits the needs of the majority of the people.

Carers come into many homes in Canton to provide domiciliary support, care in the community, personal care and meals on wheels etc. These people will have to pay to visit the most vulnerable people in society. They may have to park streets away which will surely have an impact on their ability to deliver services to as many people as they currently do.

Builders, tradesman etc will have to pay and display. Who will end up footing the bill for that? The residents! If a builder is working on a house for a week, or even just a few hours, this cost will inevitably be met not by the builder but by the resident. What happens when a resident needs a skip?

Visitors permit costs have not been published. This we fear is down to the fact that the council has no intention of providing permits for visitors. Instead they will operate a voucher scheme as they do in other areas, and each resident is allocated at a cost, 20 tickets in a year. This is diabolical. This places further restrictions on the sanctity of the family, when your friends and family have to pay to come to visit you.

These proposals, if implemented, will devalue the house prices in the area. People will not choose to live in an area where dramatic parking restrictions are in place, which will remove the ability to park freely. Why not go one step further and charge people for the privilege of parking on their own driveways?

It was pointed out at the public meeting last week in Canton Community Centre, which, incidentally, was attended by over 500 people, that councillors have a duty of care to communities and break the law if they don't do their utmost to keep communities together. This scheme will dismantle the community bit by bit, taking away the very heart of things that make it so vital - local businesses, family life, as well as the smaller communities the churches represent.

The more sinister plan also is that once this scheme has been implemented in communities that are totally against it, the council will then roll it out to the rest of the city, what an excellent opportunity for them to legitimise their ways of further raising funds from local people.

Bus fares have been hiked up once again. Public transport is poor. Bringing in any controlled measures of parking before a legitimate public transport system is in operation is immoral.

How will this authority regenerate Canton and other communities when these measures have slowly dismantled their economies?

There is at present a huge plot of land at the west of the city, the site of the old Ely Paper Mill, currently earmarked for development. Why is there no provision for parking facilities to be included on this land?

Canton residents have gone door to door, as well as placing petitions in local shops and facilities. Well over a thousand people have signed the petition against these measures. These Zones are not needed, not wanted and should not be carried forward. A copy of this petition is attached for your information.

This scheme needs to be scrapped immediately. Consultants need to go back to the drawing board and engage the residents and businesses - the people affected most by these draconian measures. They will find that innovative, creative solutions can be found in a way forward that will bring most of the public along with them. That's if the council are prepared to canvass the opinions, and seek solutions, and not enforce half baked, ill thought out schemes that overall will benefit nobody.

Yours sincerely

For an on behalf of the Canton Residents Action Committee

Gaynor Cleary, Lionel Road, Canton, Cardiff
Carole Boxall, Lionel Road, Canton, Cardiff
Jane O'Toole, Lionel Road, Canton, Cardiff
Louise Hawkins, Cowbridge Road East, Canton, Cardiff
Michael Goode, York Street, Canton, Cardiff
Merilyn Mitchem, Victoria Park Road West, Canton, Cardiff
Jenny O'Keefe, Wyndham Crescent, Canton, Cardiff
Pat & Gwyn Thomas, Library Street, Canton, Cardiff
Ed Bossand, Lincoln Stret, Canton, Cardiff
Mr & Mrs Raymond Birch, Grosvenor Street, Canton, Cardiff

Enc. Canton Petition
Streets around Canton during the day

cc Councillor Elgan Morgan
Rhodri Morgan, AM
Kevin Brennan, MP
Councillor David Thomas
Councillor Ramesh Patel
Councillor Richard Cook