

TECHNICAL NOTE

MERIVALE PARKING PLAN – LESSONS LEARNT

Author & Presenter :

Steve Abley

BE(Hons) NZCE MIPENZ CPEng CEng(UK) MICE IntPE(NZ) MInstD
Managing Director – Abley Transportation Consultants
steve@abley.com

ABSTRACT

Parking is often a very contentious issue. Typically this means parking issues are only tackled at a very detailed level and in reaction to specific problems such as loading areas, school pick up and drop off or parking encroaching over driveways. A better approach, although potentially more controversial, is to tackle parking problems head on; taking into consideration the area wide causes that might be influencing these micro effects.

This technical note describes the experience of developing and implementing a comprehensive parking plan for the area of Merivale in Christchurch. Merivale is an affluent residential and retailing area and any parking rationalisation was always going to be difficult in terms of addressing the often conflicting needs of residents and businesses. Adding to this problem was the introduction of the Christchurch's first bus priority scheme on Papanui Road that bisected the study area and consideration of a number of consented (albeit controversial) private developments. Combined, this project had a number of interesting technical, logistical and political challenges. Overall the project took approximately 5 years from first identification of the problem through technical appraisal, liaison with the Community Board, public consultation, approval and ultimately implementation of the amended solution.

This presentation will be of interest to practitioners and those people involved in consultation and complex decision making. It is a real world example where the combination of issues and the selection of the best 'appropriate' solution was very difficult. It is also an example where consultation raised new issues through community feedback (that were possibly outside of the original project scope yet nevertheless important) and were then required to be considered as part of the overall project.

INTRODUCTION

The Proposed Merivale Parking Plan (PMPP) is expected to relieve parking stress by improving management of residential parking in the North Merivale area. The changed parking restrictions were expected to positively affect residents and retailers by providing increased opportunity for parking to these land uses by those that were the most entitled and most in need of car parking.

The Christchurch City Council often received complaints about parking in the North Merivale area and in September 2004, Council commissioned a parking occupancy survey and resident and motorist perception survey in and around Merivale Mall. The survey was undertaken in response to interest in parking issues developing at that time including the Coffee Culture resource consent application, St George's Hospital expansion and a potential second tier expansion of the Merivale Mall car park. A survey report was produced in April 2005 by Abley Transportation Consultants and the surveys and report resulted in the development of the PMPP.

In November 2006 the earlier survey results were checked to confirm they were still valid. Later, in April 2008 the Fendalton/Waimairi Community Board Works, Traffic and Environment Committee approved consultation of the PMPP with the wider community. Consultation took place in June and July 2008 and the results of consultation and the amended PMPP reported to the Committee in November 2008 and February 2009. The PMPP, with amendments, were endorsed by the Works and Traffic Sub Committee in February 2009. The PMPP, now simply the Merivale Parking Plan, was implemented soon after.

LOCALITY

Merivale is approximately 2.5 kilometres north of the Christchurch city centre and located approximately half way between the central city and the suburb of Papanui. Merivale is approximately bounded by Heaton Street to the north, Carlton Mill Road and Bealey Avenue to the south, Rossall Street to the west and Springfield Road to the east. The location of Merivale and the PMPP (North Merivale) in relation to Christchurch City is shown in Figure 1.

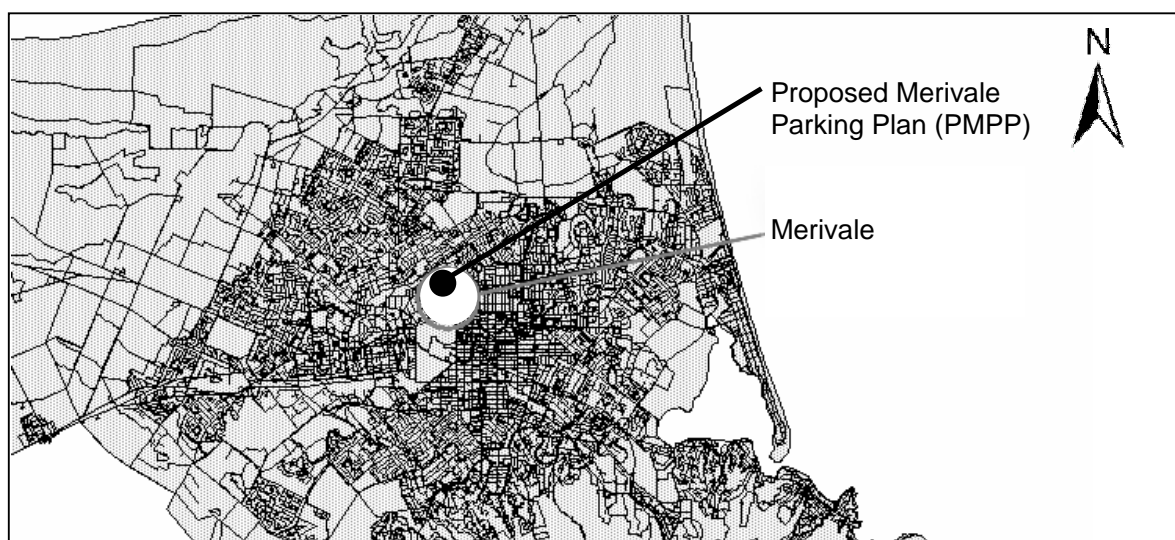


Figure 1 Merivale Locality Plan

Papanui Road bisects Merivale and is a Minor Arterial that carries about 23,500 vehicles per day. Heaton Street and Innes Road are also Minor Arterials and St Albans Street is a Collector Road. All the other streets in the area are Local Roads.

The commercial area of Merivale comprises an area of approximately 46,000m² and has approximately 28,000m² of retail, office and other commercial floor space. Merivale can be considered a 'niche' in terms of its higher end fashion stores, restaurants and cafés, which attracts shoppers from a wide catchment. Merivale Mall also has a small supermarket that supports a community that is mainly affluent with a high proportion of elderly; twenty percent of the resident population is greater than 65 years old.

PARKING SURVEYS AND RESULTS

Survey Design

The survey was undertaken in four parts:

1. A survey of the quantity of available parking and parking type was undertaken and the survey area divided into survey sections based on block lengths and parking type. The purpose of this survey is to identify parking supply.
2. A parking beat survey was undertaken from 8am to 5pm whereby a surveyor counted the number of parked vehicles 'on the hour' in the survey section. The purpose of this survey is to identify parking demand.
3. A vehicle survey form was distributed to all vehicles that were parked in each survey section at 11am. The surveys were voluntarily completed by the motorist and returned to the survey contractor for analysis. The purpose of this qualitative survey is to identify motorist trends and perceptions.
4. A resident survey was distributed to all residential dwellings adjacent a survey section. The surveys were voluntarily completed by the resident and returned to the survey contractor for analysis. The purpose of this qualitative survey is to identify resident perceptions.

Parking Inventory and Performance

Within the study area the greatest quantity of on-street parking is unrestricted parking, 1078 spaces, followed by different types of restricted on-street parking including taxi, loading and various P15 to P120 parking that account for 199 spaces. The split between unrestricted and restricted on-street parking is about 85/15 (or about 6 unrestricted spaces to 1 restricted space).

The problem identified from the motorist parking survey is parking durations are generally excessive; approximately 90% of motorists were parking for longer than 4 hours and 40% of motorists were parking for longer than 8 hours. This length of stay reflects commuter parking and again, not unsurprisingly 88% of the motorist survey responses indicated 'working' as their primary parking purpose. The measured effect is that car parks are not turned over on a regular basis and hence on street parking is unavailable for local residents or their visitors.

To assist understanding of parking occupancy it was considered necessary to quantify the performance and consider the current Level of Service (LOS). LOS is a qualitative measure that is typically used to describe operational conditions within a traffic stream, based on service measures such as speed and travel time, freedom to manoeuvre, traffic implications, comfort and convenience. Six LOS are typically defined, designated 'A' to 'F', where 'A' represents the best operating conditions and 'F' the worst.

LOS can be applied to other elements of transportation performance, such as parking, and for this project Abley Transportation Consultants devised and divided the classification criteria as shown in Table 1. When combined with photographs reflecting each LOS this aided presentation and dissemination of the parking occupancy results.

Table 1 On Street Parking LOS Definitions

Grade	Occupancy	Quality	Colour	Definition
F	>80%	Worst	Red	Traffic circulation will be high as motorists 'hunt' for an available car park and motorists may not be able to find an available car park space at all. Parking infringements widespread and illegal parking common. Private off street parking operators will typically be providing 'paid' parking to meet market demand.
E	60% - 79%	↑ ↓	Orange	Difficult to find a car park and circulation will almost always be required to find an available car park; it will inevitably not be close to the motorist's destination. Parking infringement is common although illegal parking is infrequent.
D	40% - 59%		Yellow	High probability that a motorist will be able to find an available car park with ease. Vehicle circulation might be necessary to find a car park very close to the motorists' destination. Parking infringements will generally be low, illegal parking uncommon.
C	20% - 40%		Light Green	Easy to find a car park close to the motorists' destination, vehicle circulation is unlikely to be necessary to find a car park very close to the motorists' destination.
A and B	<19%		Best	Dark Green

The parking surveys showed parking demand in the North Merivale area is heavily commuter based and every weekday up to 500 on-street parked vehicles are 'worker' vehicles. Consequently, and because most of the residential areas do not include parking restrictions, amenity is reduced in these areas.

CONCEPT AND CONSULTATION

The Proposal

The PMPP concept included:

1. Removing unrestricted parking on the roads connected to both sides of Papanui Road in the area of the PMPP and implementing a P120 area wide parking restriction that operates on weekdays between 11am and 3pm.
 - a. The restriction is intended to affect retail and commercial commuter parking, making it difficult for employees in the area to park on street all day and thereby encourage employees to change travel mode or park in employer provided parking spaces. The benefit of this approach is it does not remove all free parking and hence it is expected to better provide for people undertaking shopping trips by private motor vehicle.
 - b. The restriction has benefits for residents because they can still park for more than 24 hours on the unrestricted side of the road and they will have an improved probability of finding a car park during a weekday. It does not guarantee resident parking availability, although given most residents would prefer to park on the unrestricted side it probably removes the availability of these spaces for commuters. Residents would be unaffected on weekends.
2. Adjusting a number of existing parking restrictions in the immediate area to support the PMPP parking philosophy including linkages to school parking restrictions, the Papanui Road bus priority proposals, and the other proposals for local residential street improvements.

It was recommended the PMPP be implemented in stages and a monitoring regime would be implemented that would measure the effectiveness of each implemented stage. Any identified problems or opportunities would be addressed as part of subsequent stages.

Initially the concept was for implementing parking restrictions on one side of some of the roads in the PMPP only. Depending on the results of the monitoring regime, the time period of the parking restrictions could be extended, the area of parking restriction increased or

other opportunities identified. These other proposals would be subject to separate consideration by the Community Board and discrete consultation.

The PMPP that was distributed for consultation included four stages; the first stage included a core area around Merivale Mall on both sides of Papanui Road and P120 restriction on one side of the road. The later stages included more and extended parking restrictions, both in time and area and hence more awkwardness for commuter parking.

Consultation Design

Consultation was designed by Abley Transportation Consultants and Christchurch City Council staff. Stakeholders were considered to include all residents (both occupiers and land owners), businesses (both occupiers and landowners), schools and medical institutions/organisations in the North Merivale area.

The PMPP was outlined in a consultation newsletter that was distributed in early June 2008. The newsletter outlined the extent of the study area, the reasoning for the PMPP and the proposed four stage implementation plan. A copy of the newsletter was distributed to approximately 4,500 occupiers, absentee land owners, residents, businesses and employees in the area. A further 200 newsletters were distributed at meetings and by providing extra copies to retailers and residents. Every business owner was visited by Council officers, handing out additional newsletters and answering questions. Many residents were also visited.

A total of 4,700 survey forms were distributed. Council received 375 responses that technically equates to a response rate of 8% although this method of reporting the response rate is probably inappropriate given the coverage of survey forms supplied to the area. Of the responses 76% could be identified as coming from residents or residential land owners, 2% could be identified as coming from business and the remaining 22% had an unknown source because the address was given as a post office box or not supplied by the respondent.

Consultation Results

The submission form asked two explicit questions. Question one asked if respondents believed there was an issue with parking in Merivale; question two asked if respondents generally supported the plan for their street. All other commentary was categorised and analysed for trends, concerns and suggestions.

Respondents mostly agreed that parking is an issue in the Merivale area, with 62% of respondents agreeing there is an issue that needs to be addressed. Support for the PMPP was mixed, with 33% in support, 40% not in support and the other 27% not stating a response.

Consultation resulted in some small changes to initial stage of the PMPP. In reflection though the initial four stage PMPP was too complex for consultation. Certainly this is a lesson for others when considering consultation materials. Ideally consultation should be simple with clearly detailed proposals without the vagaries of what might be later stages and when later stages might be implemented. Alternatively only the scheme concept should be consulted. Given the often contentious nature of parking proposals, in hindsight the consultation process could have been simplified. Certainly consultation produced some very strong negative feedback as shown in Figure 2 and a number of requests for resident only parking permits. Positive feedback existed, but was significantly less vocal.

STATIONARY VEHICLE OFFENCE
INFRINGEMENT NOTICE
(Issued under Section 42a of the Transport Act 1988 and Section 150 of the Land Transport Act 1998)

ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITY:
 CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL
ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: P.O. BOX 99368, CHRISTCHURCH

TO: The user, registered owner or person entitled to possession of the vehicle described below.
 The Infringement Fee is payable within 28 days of this notice.

A Parking Ticket Outside Your Own House?

With the CCC's 'proposed Merivale parking plan', this is exactly what will happen.

Think of:

- Your car
- Your friends visiting
- Your family visiting
- Your nanny / babysitter
- Your cleaner, tradesmen, etc.

If you park your car on the street outside your house during weekdays you will get a parking ticket.

When will you get a ticket?
 The restrictions will apply from 11am – 3pm Monday to Friday. During these hours, vehicles parked for more than 2 hours will get a ticket.

Being a ratepayer will not give you the right to park outside your house.

What streets are affected?

- Lenster Rd
- Aikmens Rd
- Murrays Place
- Mansfield Ave
- McDougal Ave
- Akela St
- Office Rd
- Winchester St
- Rugby St
- Papanui Rd

Why is the council doing this?
 It hopes to make all Merivale workers (the mall, hospital, shops, hospital) use the bus instead of driving. Instead, the plan will likely just cause commuters to park in streets further away.

What can you do?
 Council figures show that only a third of residents agree with the plan for their street. They hope apathy rules.

Come to the board meeting: **8am this Monday 24/11** at Fendalton Service Centre, Cnr J effreys and Clyde Roads. The council probably hopes no one will show up at that very inconvenient time.

Visit this web site for more information or to leave your views. See us at:
www.merivaletypepad.com

The Total Fee may be posted to:
 INSPECTOR'S & ENFORCEMENT UNIT
 P.O. BOX 99368, CHRISTCHURCH

Or paid in the Cash Office 192-173 Tuam Street Mon-Fri 8.30 - 5.00
 Payments may be made by any CHEQUE or any Credit Transfer Authorisation
 Please make cheques payable to: CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL.
 Payments by cheque should be crossed NOT TRANSFERABLE.

(IMPORTANT)
 PLEASE READ THE INFORMATION
 PRINTED ON THE BACK OF THE FORM

Figure 2 Merivale Parking Plan Protest Campaign Flyer

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This project involved the typical 'issues', 'investigation', 'problem identification', 'proposed solution', 'consultation' and 'approval' stages most transportation planners and engineers will be familiar. Interestingly the technical complexity of this particular project was not particularly demanding. Rather, communicating the complexity of an overly complex staged implementation methodology was the problem.

The complexity of public consultation then transferred and amplified to a political level that in turn required increased resources, precise and sensitive management. More technical analysis was required to justify previously accepted conclusions and more presentation materials were required to clearly show the reasoning behind certain decisions e.g. further confirmation of parking occupancy. This made for a very interesting and challenging project but also, ultimately a more successful project given the issues were clearly highlighted for resolution. Additionally highlighting issues before implementation negates the 'post match' hangover that can sometimes accompany less publicised projects, which are then litigated post implementation with increased costs and potentially statutory consequences.

The Merivale Parking Plan has been implemented for over a year and anecdotally the disincentive to commute to work by motor vehicle appears to be working successfully. This is probably also due in part because of Council's initiatives for public transport, walking and cycling projects that were implemented in conjunction with the Merivale Parking Plan. Certainly there are lessons to be learnt from the PMPP although overall the Merivale Parking Plan is a successful example of considering parking holistically. It provides a very good example for others seeking to consider the area wide causes of parking micro effects.

REFERENCES

ABLEY TRANSPORTATION CONSULTANTS (2005), Merivale Parking Appraisal. Christchurch City Council.