



# BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL

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15<sup>th</sup> December, 2022

## **An Open Letter to The Lord Rose of Monewden, Chairman, Asda Supermarkets Limited**

The Lord Rose of Monewden  
Chairman of the Board  
Asda Supermarkets Limited  
Asda Stores  
Asda House  
South Bank  
Great Wilson Street  
Leeds  
LS11 5AD.

By post and email: [customer.services@asda.co.uk](mailto:customer.services@asda.co.uk)

Dear Lord Rose,

### **Asda Biggleswade – Changes to Parking Restrictions**

I write to ask you to intervene in a dispute with your supermarket in Biggleswade.

The Asda supermarket in Biggleswade has recently changed the restrictions in its car park from a maximum of 2 hours to a maximum of 1.5 hours. This is detrimental to the town centre environment and local businesses and therefore of concern to the Town Council.

The Town Clerk has written several times to invite Asda Supermarkets Ltd. to enter into discussions with the Town Council about the reasons for this change, whether it is really necessary and to request that the decision be reversed.

We have made no real progress with this except that, on 17<sup>th</sup> October, we received a communication from Asda Executive Relations Team which included the following:

*'Thank you for allowing me to investigate this with the store. I have now received an update.*

*I have been advised that the parking arrangements for the store remain at 2 hours for customers before any charges are received. They are currently advertising 1.5 hours. However, also offer an additional half hour grace period for parking.*

*I have received a request of evidence of the agreement between the store and the council for these parking measures to remain in place and would be very grateful if this is something I could take from you.'*

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This does not make sense. It cannot be right that visitors to Biggleswade, our residents and, of course, Asda shoppers, should be expected to rely on word-of-mouth or rumour to gain information about the length of time they are able to park without penalty. Surely if that were the case, the signage should be returned as soon as possible to show a maximum of two hours parking allowed?

However, very soon after the receipt of the Asda Team letter, the notices in the car park were supplemented with an invitation to extend the parking time by paying a charge. Perhaps this is the motivation for the change?

The scale of charges allows for 24-hour, 7-day, 14-day, 21-day and monthly parking. From this, it could be concluded that the residents of Biggleswade have had the amenity of a useful parking facility reduced by having less spaces available due to long stay parking. A loss to Biggleswade to boost Asda's profits?

The terms of the S.106 agreement, dated 17<sup>th</sup> July 2003, state in Clause 9.4.2 that the supermarket 'shall consult with the Council regarding the use and operation of the car park, taking notice of the Council's observations'. There has been no consultation to date with either Central Bedfordshire Council or the Town Council. This leaves Asda in breach of the S.106 agreement.

Clause 9.4.1 of the S.106 agreement states that the store must:

'provide from the date of occupation a car park forming part of the retail development which shall be available for the unrestricted use by members of the general public for parking of private motor vehicles free of charge for a maximum period of two hours with the proviso that at times when car parking is not available for customers visiting the store forming part of the retail development and/or the car park is full and/or access and egress thereto becomes congested the store may in its absolute discretion on not more than 10 days in any calendar year in the interests of safety and the free flow of vehicles accessing and egressing the car park impose methods of control in relation to the use of the same and provided further that in the event of such controls being required on any other occasion not to impose any such controls until after consultation and agreement of the method of control with the Council.'

Whilst we acknowledge that this is not competent drafting, any lay person would interpret it as meaning that there would be 2 hours' free parking.

The interpretation of the clause by Asda suggesting that 1.5 hours, being less than the maximum of 2 hours, means that the agreement is being complied with is disingenuous. Are we to expect that at some point the time will be reduced to an hour or even less? Would it really have been the intention to leave Asda the option to decide that any length of time less than two hours would comply with the agreement?

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Discussions before the store opened between councillors and council officers and the original store manager and the then Property Director of Asda, acknowledged how important the car parking at Asda is for the town. Another option discussed was that there should be 70 'town' spaces, i.e. under council control rather than store control. The 2 hours' free parking was taken forward instead.

The parking arrangements at Asda have worked well for 20 years. The Town Council would like to understand the reason for the change now and to request that Asda reconsiders its decision in light of its detrimental effect on the town. It should be noted that the Town Council car parks offer 2 hours' free parking for the very reason that we wish to encourage the use of our town centre and its businesses.

I hope you will encourage the relevant people in your business to open a dialogue with the Town Council.

Yours sincerely,

Madeline Russell (Cllr.)  
Deputy Mayor of Biggleswade.

c.c. Ms. H.K. Selby, Company Secretary, Asda Supermarkets Limited  
The Store Manager, Asda Biggleswade  
Asda Executive Relations Team  
The Editor, Biggleswade Chronicle  
Jon Sheldon, Central Bedfordshire Council  
Sally Hicks, Central Bedfordshire Council  
Biggleswade Town Council Website and Facebook