

Sustainable Communities Act 2007

Proposal Summary Form

Date of Panel Meeting: Wednesday 27 May 2009

Name of proposer or organisation

Transition Exeter Transport Group

Summary of proposal

Non domestic rates on store car parking spaces – Enable the council to levy non domestic rates on store car parking spaces – this would support local shops and local producers, and discourage car use.

Details of Consultation carried out

Discussions have taken place at the Exeter Transport Conference.

Officers Comments

Non Domestic rates are charged on all non domestic property. The rateable value of any such property is calculated by assessing the value of the commercial floorspace and the value of the car parking that is provided with it. All income from non domestic rates is collected by the City Council and passed to the government. It is slightly unclear whether the proposal is really intended to seek 'repatriation' of this non domestic rate income or to introduce charges for parking at stores. If the intention is the former, then this is a policy which has long been advocated by the City Council and the LGA but it will have no impact on travel demand. From the content of the form, it would appear that the intended purpose is to enforce charging for out of town store parking. This is, in principle, a measure which the Council should support as a means of levelling up the playing field between in and out of town shopping and car and non car modes. A proposal to introduce this nationally was floated in the late 1990s but was heavily opposed by the supermarket operators and subsequently dropped by government. It would need primary legislation to introduce this. The proposal that 'discounts' be offered to stores sourcing 30% of their goods from within 30 miles of Exeter (which are not first transported to a distribution centre more than 30 miles away) would in practice be unworkable. A large bureaucracy would be needed to verify any such claims which would have very significant scope for fraudulent claims.

Panel Questions/Comments

- What difference will this proposal make to Exeter – could any income be ring-fenced for other 'green-schemes' in Exeter? Should this be part of the proposal?
- Could an environmental tax be imposed, with reduced rates for environmentally friendly materials used in car parks, tree planting or selling local produce.

Supported/Not Supported by Panel and reasons

Unanimous support for this to be taken forward through SCA process. Consider ring-fencing options for Exeter at a later date.

Adapt to reduce rates if environmental and local sustainability issues addressed, eg locally sourced goods, environmental features etc.