

Editorial

Residential parking: First things first

Local councils planning to introduce residential parking schemes ought to think again before going ahead with their plans. Irrespective of whether or not residential parking schemes are legally discriminatory, it makes sense for councils that have been allowed to launch such schemes by the transport authority to mark time and, as it has been suggested by many, consider first the problem in its entirety before putting up the signposts. True, there is no easy solution to the parking problem but if residential parking schemes are introduced haphazardly they can only add to deep frustration and inconvenience that many already have to endure in Malta's traffic congested streets.

With the rapid annual growth in the number of new cars on the roads, successive governments could have foreseen the parking problem that was bound to arise in many key localities but, apparently, they did not and, if they did, they failed to come up with solutions. Had Malta had a decent public transport service, maybe the situation would not have been as bad as it is today, with many preferring to use their own cars rather than the buses. Years and years of talk about reform in the service have not led to any substantial improvement. And, strangely enough, few entrepreneurs have thought of building car parks. The end result of all this is the chaotic traffic situation we have today, which is bound to get even worse as more and more new and second-hand cars are registered.

Would residential parking schemes ease the situation or make it worse? With governments having markedly failed to tackle the problem, it is certainly time for cool heads to take stock of the situation and see how it can be handled without causing further unnecessary hardship. Whether public transport improves or not - and, on the basis of past experience, few hold much hope that it would ever meet general expectations - it is clear that the traffic and parking problem in conurbation areas is unlikely to ease, unless, for example, the country takes a completely different course and considers what building contractor Angelo Xuereb has for long been suggesting, a monorail.

Has such a proposal been ever officially considered? What would be its cost today? A monorail linking, say, Qormi, Birkirkara, Swieqi, St Andrew's, St Julians, Sliema, and Valletta, could revolutionise public transport. If the proposal might have been considered futuristic when it was first made by Mr Xuereb many years ago, it is certainly not today. The biggest problem, no doubt, lies in how to finance such a huge project.

Of more immediate consideration, however, is the need for the creation of parking lots on the fringes of key habitation or business areas, or, in the absence of sites where these can be built, the building of underground parks.

For it simply does not make sense for any council, more so that of such an important locality as Sliema, for example, to even think of introducing a residential parking scheme without first ensuring that adequate parking space is first provided for those who have to visit the place for one reason or another. It is difficult to park in Valletta or Floriana but imagine what the situation would have been like without the multi-storey car park built opposite the Hotel Phoenicia.

So, before going ahead with the introduction of residential parking schemes, councils would first need to see how the parking problem could first be solved without creating more problems to the locality.

Comments

Alfred Camilleri (3 days, 17 hours ago)

It And where would Borg do his (her) banking, daily shopping for food, is obvious that M. Borg is a Sliema resident with a car and no garage (presumably). S/he presumes to be given the privilege of having several patches of public road in Sliema for parking his car, this on the strength of his being a Sliema resident. As if non-resident Sliema shopkeepers, workers in shops, banks, offices, hotels, restaurants, cafes and other retail outlets, those in the Sliema hospital, clinics, government offices, schools, the Local Council itself, not to mention people who need to come to Sliema to visit their elderly parents, or other relatives and friends and those who choose to visit Sliema (as is their right) for their leisure and entertainment, have less, or no right at all, for parking facilities in Sliema, when they pay the same road tax as Mr or Ms Borg and Sliema car owners do.

Borg wonders whether it is the fault of Sliema residents that banks, shops etc choose to operate in the town. Does s/he envisage a locality, village, township, city, or call it what you will, anywhere in the civilized world, consisting solely of houses/apartments of residence and nothing else?

Galea. L (3 days, 19 hours ago)

M. Borg

Are there any houses left in Sliema?

Jean-Pierre Aquilina (3 days, 21 hours ago)

The new transport authority has found a cheap and cheerful solution: walking or cycling. I invite readers to view the solution in today's paper.

Mr. M (4 days, 1 hour ago)

Maybe we should start searching the web for ideas and see what other counties do... this should be ideal http://www.ritchuu.or.jp/c5_e.htm M

M.Borg (4 days, 2 hours ago)

@ Emanuel Cilia Debono

Reading blogs like these gives one the impression that non Sliema residents are only familiar with the Ferries and the Sliema front.

Sliema is an old locality hence the lack of garages. Garages can only be found under apartment blocks. However most of Sliema residents live in houses and these do not have garages.

People mention the Floriana car park, but no one mentions the very large car park that there is in High Street Sliema. This car park is always almost empty , do non residents know about it ?

The Sliema residents does not , " want the exclusive right to enjoy parking in front of their own homes "

Is it the fault of the Sliema resident if banks, shops, hotels, offices etc. choose to operate in their locality ?

Every day the Sliema resident is faced with hundreds of cars all looking for a parking space which they sometimes occupy for 8 or 12 hours. at the " expense of the Sliema resident " who is never able to find a parking place in his own home town.

What do you find "so unfair " with residential parking in situations like these?

P.Pace (4 days, 2 hours ago)

The situation we are in as regards parking shortage is our fault. We are too spoiled even though we live in a very small island.

I was in Japan. There, to own a car you must have a parking place, either a garage or rent a car space. To go to work, shopping or a night out you have to find other means of transport such as train or bus, or if you use your car you have to park in public garages obviously at a rate per hour which I can assure you it is not cheap.

I cannot understand why we do not use public transport. I agree that the state of affairs in this service is not up to standard as other countries have.

In my opinion, before introducing residential parking, the authorities should first improve the public transport and start without any further delay the sea transport. We are surrounded by such a beautiful sea and nothing is done to make use of it. What a pity! It is very interesting to visit this site about the parking in the State of Guernsey which is the size of Birkirkara in Malta.

<http://www.gov.gg/ccm/navigation/travel-transport/permits/resident-s-parking-permits/>

D Vella (4 days, 5 hours ago)

It is way beyond high time that the 'professors' at MEPA should reverse their policy of not allowing developers to provide a surplus of parking facilities within their building's footprint which can then be made available on the open market to alleviate the existing problem!

Given that we already have an acute parking problem and that a notable percentage of our buildings (in places like Sliema in particular) date to pre-motor car days and hence lack a garage, it would make perfect sense to make it mandatory for new developers of apartment blocks to provide a parking surplus of at least 50% . . . this could even be based on proper studies of the residential parking situation . . . which obviously MEPA has never carried out!! So because MEPA knows better than everybody else, even

when the opposite is glaringly obvious, they just stick to an idiotic blanket policy that was drafted in the 1980's and continue insisting that surplus parking is unacceptable !!! It is short sighted and moronic policies like this that lead to even more short sighted and moronic 'solutions' such a residents' parking schemes!!!

T Aquilina (4 days, 6 hours ago)

With an estimated 300,000 cars on a tiny island, some factors should be kept in mind. Never mind the level of service of our transport system, one must remember that many just have to use their own car to work, say if they have to take their children to school / to their mums / nurseries etc on the way and back. Others attend lectures or part-time jobs straight on from work. In such scenarios, the use of one's car becomes essential if one has only minutes to spare between one place and the other. Apart from a more efficient public transport facilities, there should be mandatory building of carparks private or otherwise - with new buildings for showrooms or office blocks as well as with all apartments on plan. As for Sliema, the park and ride system as used in Valletta would now appear to be more effective and realistic solution. Some residents' parking could be implemented since this is definitely a problem area, however 80 streets may be rather excessive. As with most things, compromise is best rather going to extremes.

Emanuel Cilia Debono (4 days, 8 hours ago)

Does free residential parking imply that those residents, who failed to bother to rent or otherwise provide their own garage facilities will now be allowed exclusive rights to enjoy parking facilities, in front of their own homes, free of charge, at the expense not only of non residents, but also of residents, who had incurred expenses to provide their own garage facilities ?

It is already unfair to allow unrestricted parking facilities for residents and non residents alike. Allowing residents free exclusive parking rights makes the present situation even more unfair. Since car owners pay the same road tax, why not consider tax exemptions for those residents who have provided their own garages?

There is a lot of construction work going on all over the island. Reconstructed buildings are expected to be provided with garage facilities. In my locality, developers (small and big alike) tend to make it a point to excavate for garages underneath their new constructions, very often at great inconvenience to neighbours and road users. Does it mean that after all this inconvenience, tenants will now be able to claim free exclusive residential parking space on the roads as well?

Joseph Meli (4 days, 8 hours ago)

The Leader's comment most appropriate, especially for the introduction of monorails which I have to see what possibilities would one have, is it too expensive to introduce it, having a restricted amount of residents users.

On multi-storey parking (Floriana), a good idea, can be enlarged further, or do one between bastions, or under Floriana parade ground and do it again as football..etc..ground..on..top. The Independence Garden, Sliema one can create a three storey parking site.

The Independence gardens would still be in a much better view on top for all passers-by to use and parking below could be exposed at the sea side level, so as to have a lot of

artificial light during day time. If this idea is taken, and work be taken up this part of the road would be only closed for one month or two, and has to commence during winter time. It would be able to take much more than 500 vehicles.

There are other areas which can be used as such along the sea front of Sliema, St. Julians, Gzira, Ta' Xbiex, but then local councils can use the funds for such purpose from that collected by MPA or MEPA..in..building..applications.

r pace bonello (4 days, 8 hours ago)

I hope that the Sliema Council reads the editorial and thinks hard before committing itself to something which turns out to be unconstitutional thereby saving itself the expense. Sliema residents might be interested to know that a debate on the subject will be aired on RTK radio today at 1715hrs
