

# East Street parking price review

SHOPKEEPERS IN SOUTHAMPTON ARE calling on the council to cut "punitive" on-street parking charges and double the time customers can stay.

Retailers from Below Bar also want the one-way traffic flow in East Street to be reversed in a bid to pull in more shoppers.

They have written to city bosses asking for the changes to help them battle the recession's effect on their businesses, which they say are also being hard hit by a triple whammy of roadworks, rent and rates rises.

Blaming high prices for a rash of empty parking spaces, they have called for drivers to be given up to half an hour free and for charges to be cut back from the present £2 an hour to £1.20. They also want the maximum time allowed to be doubled to at least two hours.

"This is not only the unanimous view of East Street but Queensway, and the High Street as well. There's total unanimity," said Rashmi Chande, of the East Street Traders' Association, which represents 32 businesses.

"They have been improving the High Street visually, but they have killed the traffic in the process. It looks like a no-go area now because they have narrowed the road. The motorised traffic is dramatically reduced down East Street. We have lots of parking spaces and the huge car park behind us is under-used.

"There should be a turn into the street off Queensway. It will improve the traffic flow and make people aware of the street."



He said all traders were unanimous in their condemnation of the parking charges, which damage trade and force shoppers to rush their business.

"The people at the council are in cloud cuckoo land," he said. "How can we get out of recession if we restrict people's shopping time? It's like we want to get rid of them. At the moment it is 80p for 20 minutes and there's a large choice of spaces as a result. I think it's punitive."

Ian Welland, city centre manager said: "An urgent review of on-street car parking by the council is crucial to businesses at this time.

"Car parking is a contentious issue but with many businesses facing rises in rent and rates, as well as ongoing street works and enhancements having impact, the council could play a positive role in helping to redress matters to increase footfall and trade in the area quickly."

**ABOVE: East Street traders battle for changes to improve shopping experience for customers and shop owners**