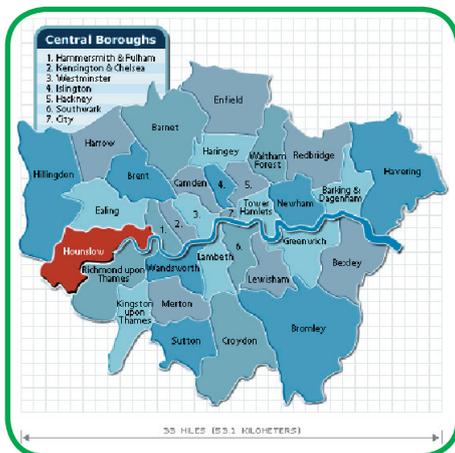


# Metropolitan Parking Needs a Metropolitan Solution

## Case Study on Hounslow

### Background

The London Borough of Hounslow is a major residential area and home to Heathrow Airport. Hounslow's almost 21.6 square miles and population of 220,000 covers a wide diversity of areas, including Brentford, Chiswick, Feltham and Hounslow town – which is currently undergoing major redevelopment.



The M4 provides easy road access into Hounslow, making it a major entry point for motorists travelling into London from the west. Good public transport links (3 tube stations on the District line and 5 on the Piccadilly line) allow quick and easy travel from Hounslow into Central London.

With land and road space at a premium, catering for the local parking needs of residents,

commuters and visitors to the area, is challenging. Hounslow Council has 20 off-street car parks with 1,600 parking spaces and a further 46 on-street parking areas, all of which are managed by 35 Parking Attendants.

### Why Pay by Phone?

Hounslow have a history of providing excellent customer service – and many people visiting the area were paying substantial amounts of money to park. Paying these amounts with cash (especially on a regular basis) could be extremely difficult, so the Council were interested in offering payment by credit or debit card instead.

The costs of changing existing machinery to accept cards would have been substantial, so when Pay by Phone services came on the market offering a cheap alternative, the Council were immediately interested.

Like most metropolitan areas, Hounslow also suffered from crime and with parking commanding a premium price, the Council were losing significant amounts of cash through theft and vandalised machines. Again, pay by phone services meant a transfer of cash to cards, reducing the loss to the Council and offering an alternative method of payment, even when machines were out of order.



**“Standing at the ticket machine and realising you don’t have the right change can be very frustrating. Pay by phone is simple to use, and offers motorists an alternative means of payment, taking away the hassle of having to find change.”**

*Councillor Barbara Reid, Hounslow’s Executive Member for Environment and Planning*



## Which Solution?

Hounslow are known for their leadership in the field of customer service, so they wanted to ensure the pay by phone parking solution they chose was the best available. They also anticipated that the roll out would generate substantial PR, as it would be the largest roll out of pay by phone technology in London. Avoiding negative publicity was therefore a priority.

### Key factors in Hounslow's selection of RingGo, included:

- The use of a local rate (020) number for the call, offering the cheapest rate possible. Alternative pay by phone solutions used a premium rate number which Hounslow felt unfairly penalised the customer.
- A Customer help desk offering 24 x 7 x 365 day support to customers, as well as a technical help desk which the Council could contact 24 x 7 if technical or service issues arose.
- Trusted supplier status. Cobalt Telephone Technologies (RingGo's parent company) had for several years provided automated telephony payment collection to Hounslow, so they had first hand knowledge of the quality of Cobalt's products, service and support.

Helen Kent, the Parking Manager for Hounslow at the time, said

**"I was impressed by the whole RingGo package, from the cheap-to-call landline number to the quality of the management information."**

*Helen Kent, Parking Manager for Hounslow, 2006*

## Implementing the solution

Despite the complexities involved in implementing RingGo in a major metropolitan area, the process was extremely smooth and quick. Project planning, surveys, equipment management, training and signing were all arranged and carried out by Cobalt staff.

Such was Hounslow's faith in the service that they didn't feel a trial of the system was necessary, but completed a full roll out of their parking facilities in one go. Hounslow provided a purchase order to Cobalt Telephone Technologies on 30th October 2006 and off-street RingGo parking went live on 12th December 6 weeks later. On street parking in Hounslow quickly followed, with full roll out completed by March 2007.

For more information on RingGo, please visit [www.RingGo.co.uk](http://www.RingGo.co.uk), phone 01256 339195 or e-mail [info@RingGo.co.uk](mailto:info@RingGo.co.uk)

## Results

Hounslow have been delighted with the results of implementing RingGo and have set high targets for usage over the next 12 months to capitalise on this.

Customers are extremely happy with the solution, demonstrated by high repeat usage. In September 2008, 83.5 per cent of all transactions were repeat users – a level consistently achieved over the preceding five months. The overall base also continues to grow, with new users joining at a good rate each month.

The Council has benefited substantially from the reduction in cash transactions – not just because of the reduced cost of handling and banking, but also because of the impact on thefts:

**"Before we introduced RingGo, it was extremely difficult to measure exactly how much money we were losing through theft from machines and vandalism. Now we have a much better gauge and transferring cash transactions to card, has become a priority."**

**"The RingGo system allows us to provide an alternative payment method to the customer, while offering enhanced revenue protection to the authority. Introducing RingGo was definitely a good decision. From a financial point of view, I'd definitely recommend it."**

*Kevin Hagan, Head of Parking Services, Hounslow*