

Response by Ken Angold Stephens (received 27 May 08).

Unauthorised Parking on Housing Estates – report from LRA Group

Unauthorised parking is a very contentious issue in many areas and it is our view that the questionnaire in the Council bulletin 21/2008 over-simplifies the problems and could, as a result, lead to an adverse decision on the basis that alternatives options were not available. Some of these were explored in a T & F panel 2 years ago.

In answer to the specific questions posed in the questionnaire:

Funding for off-street parking schemes. There has been a serious backlog of parking schemes for years and at the current rate of completion there is no prospect of them being completed in the foreseeable future. This has partly been due to an inadequate budget and it has been the cause of huge frustration on our estates and anger at this Council's failure to respond to the urgent requests for action from our residents. The Council should therefore use this opportunity to spend the maximum amount possible over the next 4 years to tackle this backlog; however as it is subject to match funding from the General Fund it may prove necessary to moderate the maximum figure to one that is affordable.

The 6m rule. This is very contentious and directly pits car owners against those who wish to protect our green spaces. Our view is that there are real difficulties in some areas and that a small relaxation of the 6m rule would be preferable to damaged verges; however we feel that 12m or longer is far too long and that this would lead to irreparable destruction of our green swards.

It is not always fully understood that one cross-over loses 1.5-2 road parking spaces (not one space as suggested in the Bulletin) in order to preserve sight lines and to allow for flared entrances. It also removes a road parking space from the opposite side of the road to the entrance if the road is narrow. A row of cross-overs would therefore eliminate any parking on the road and lead to less parking availability overall, unless the cross-over itself could accommodate 2 cars. If the cross-over is long enough to accommodate 2 cars then it is far better to create parking bays which would leave the sward substantially intact!

Our proposal therefore is that the 6m rule may be relaxed to a maximum of 8 or 9m as anything greater would seriously damage our green swards. If 2 neighbours wished to have a cross-over we would encourage them to share a single width cross-over. However since the implementation of a parking scheme might remove the need for a cross-over we would propose that all requests for cross-overs in roads where a parking scheme is planned within the next 4 years are not agreed until the parking scheme has been implemented unless a special case is made for a registered disabled resident. In addition we should specify that all front garden parking surfaces and cross-overs must be of porous materials but not shingle as this drags on to the green sward and pavements, that the cross-over should be grasscrete where possible (grasscrete is not generally suitable for clay soils) with bollards to stop parking spilling over onto other parts of the green sward. Note: Government legislation on front garden parking is expected later this year. Permeable surfacing is a likely requirement.

Enforcement. There are serious parking issues on all our estates, some of which is simply because there is nowhere else to go, but also some which is inconsiderate and some which

is dangerous. Whilst enforcement officers should be pragmatic where there is no alternative and it is not dangerous, there should be vigorous enforcement in dangerous areas, such as parking on corners or so far onto the pavement that pedestrians are forced to walk in the road. The more pragmatic approach should not be publicised as some drivers will perceive this as the green light to park anywhere and get away with it.