

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-035-2008/09
Date of meeting: 1 September 2008



Portfolio: Housing.
Subject: Off Street Parking.
Responsible Officer: Paul Pledger (01992-564248).
Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992-564470).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the following recommendations of the Housing Scrutiny Panel be agreed:**
 - (a) that the maximum permitted amount of grass verge to be removed in order to construct a vehicular crossover to allow residents to park their vehicles/s in their front garden be increased from 6 metres to 12 metres; and**
 - (b) that the additional £300,000 available in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme from 2009/2010 be made available to fund further off-street parking schemes match funded from the General Fund;**
- (2) That the results of the feasibility study for off-street parking schemes at Chester Road, Colebrook Gardens, Harvey Gardens, Audley Gardens and Hillcroft in Loughton as well as School Lane, Abbess Roding, as listed in table 1 at appendix 1, be noted;**
- (3) That each of the off-street parking schemes listed in Recommendation 2 above be progressed to detailed design stage and tenders be sought in accordance with Contract Standing Orders, with the outcome of the tender exercise being reported to the Housing Portfolio Holder for approval at a future date; and**
- (4) That the current ranking for all other off-street parking schemes, as set out in tables 2 in appendix 2, be noted.**

Executive Summary:

Following the Highways Agency returning to Essex County Council, the Housing Directorate have taken over responsibility for the off street programme, which has meant that all off street parking schemes that had previously been identified have been reassessed in line with a new procedure, and all sites have been ranked according to the new assessment score. A detailed feasibility study has been carried out of the highest ranked schemes, and residents consulted. This report is to note the outcome of the feasibility study and the resident consultation exercise, and to agree the schemes that are to be carried forward for detailed design and construction. It also considers the outcome of a review undertaken by the Housing Scrutiny Panel into vehicular crossovers and the use of additional HRA resources in the Capital Programme from 2009/10 for off-street parking.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

- (i) To agree the off-street parking programme for 2009/10.
- (ii) To note the priority list for other off-street parking schemes.
- (iii) To agree a policy on vehicular crossovers to assist Officers when considering future applications.
- (iv) To agree the budgets available for off-street parking projects.

Other Options for Action:

- (i) To re-sequence the off-street parking schemes based on different criteria.
- (ii) Not to undertake off-street parking schemes where the cost per bay is over an agreed limit.
- (iii) Not to undertake off-street parking schemes.
- (iv) To maintain the maximum length of vehicular crossovers at 6 meters, or to set an alternative maximum length other than 12 meters.
- (v) Not to allocate the additional £300,000 available in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme from 2009/2010 to fund off-street parking schemes with matched funding from the General Fund.

Report:

Enforcement of Unauthorised Parking on Housing Estates

1. As requested by the Cabinet, at its meeting on 3 July 2008, the Housing Scrutiny Panel considered a report on the approach to be taken on enforcement of unauthorized parking on housing estates, the future funding of off-street parking schemes, and reviewing the policy on the maximum length of Housing-owned grass verge that can be removed to install a vehicular crossover.
2. Many of the Council's estates were built during the late 1940s and 1950s and were designed along garden village principles with cul-de-sacs, greens and grass verges. With the subsequent growth in car ownership, residents are experiencing severe parking problems on estates where parking both on and off road is at a premium. In addition, due to the introduction of permit parking, many side roads are becoming further congested (possibly by commuters) particularly in the Debden and Epping areas, with vehicles being forced onto grassed verges.
3. Complaints received by Housing from the public are very much on the increase; these include increased telephone calls, letters and occasionally petitions.
4. Residents are unhappy that more vehicles are being parked on grass verges causing damage to the open green spaces, which are costly to repair and can be dangerous to pedestrians and children playing. When, in response, enforcement action is taken by the Council, in the form of installing bollards, jockey rails or shrub planting, other residents complain about having nowhere to park, with cars being displaced into already heavily congested side streets.

5. In addition to receiving complaints from the public, Officers receive enquiries from Members. Some Members ask that enforcement action be taken to prevent vehicles from parking on the grassed verges with other Members asking officers not to take action as it will displace vehicles and cause problems in side streets.

6. The Housing Scrutiny Panel agreed that a Parking Enforcement Policy should be drawn up with enforcement action only being taken when there are other reasonable parking options for residents. The Panel will be considering a draft policy at their next meeting.

Vehicular Crossovers – 6 Metre Rule

7. Under the Council's current policy, the maximum permitted amount of grass verge to be removed by residents in order to construct a vehicular crossover to allow them to park their vehicles/s in their front garden is 6 metres. The 6 metre rule was agreed by the former Housing Committee on 23 March 1999 and re-affirmed by the Cabinet on 25 November 2002 and 10 April 2006.

8. If the 6 metre rule was extended this would enable more residents to park up to two vehicles off-road, although every crossover removes one available space on the street for the public to use on a first come first served basis.

9. Due to the increasing parking problems on Housing estates, in order to allow more residents to install vehicular crossovers, the Housing Scrutiny Panel is recommending to the Cabinet that the maximum permitted amount of grass verge to be removed be increased from 6 metres to 12 metres in length. The Panel further concluded that extending the rule any less than 12 metres (e.g. 8 metres) would have little effect as most grass verges are between 10 & 14 metres in length.

Off Street Parking

10. In September 2004, the former Civil Engineering and Maintenance Portfolio Holder considered a report on off-street parking bays, in which agreement was reached on a 2-year programme for off-street parking schemes. Whilst some of these schemes were completed, some were subsequently held over due to the transfer of the former Highways Section to Essex County Council in 2005.

11. Whilst the Essex County Council Highways continued with the programme until completion of committed schemes, all schemes that were agreed by the former Civil Engineering and Maintenance Portfolio Holder but not committed were handed back to the Council.

12. During 2005/6, a Task and Finish Panel considered a range of parking related issues including parking in residential areas. The outcome of that review required Officers to re-visit the off-street parking schemes and assess the highest ranked schemes and to consult with residents about their views. However, the schemes that have already been agreed by the former Civil Engineering and Maintenance Portfolio Holder have been prioritised under the new procedures.

13. A specialist Highways Consultant, Robert West Consultants has been appointed using the Council's Framework Agreement to undertake a detailed feasibility study of the top 10 ranked sites to consider the suitability of each site, to prepare up to 3 design options for consideration and to provide a budget estimate for each option. Residents were then consulted on each option.

14. Table 1 at appendix 1 sets out the results of the site assessments for each of the top

six sites where the site assessment and feasibility study has demonstrated that they are capable of having off-street parking and where the residents have been consulted and are in favour of off-street parking. The table shows the results of the resident consultation and the Consultant's estimates for each of the design options.

15. Table 2 at appendix 2 shows the results of the site assessments for all other sites that have been identified as being in need of off-street parking. Whilst the Housing Assets Section has assessed these sites, the assessment has been made on the basis of need only. These sites have yet had a detailed feasibility study undertaken and residents have not been consulted.

16. It should be noted that when the list was originally drawn up, permit parking was not in force and therefore was not taken into account within the scoring. However, as sites have been reassessed, table 2 at appendix 2 incorporates the effects of the permit parking arrangement.

17. Table 3 at appendix 2 includes schemes that have been omitted from the programme due to any combination of reasons including, not suitable for off-street parking, already having spaces installed in the past, there being no Council tenants, residents have rejected off-street parking or there is no longer a need.

18. The budget for off-street parking for 2008/2009 is £288,000 which includes amounts carried forward from previous years. Of this amount, £161,000 is Housing Revenue Account (HRA) funding with £127,000 General Fund. There is currently budget provision of £80,000 per annum in future years, with £40,800 funded from the HRA and £39,200 from the General Fund.

19. Based on the estimated costs for each of the schemes listed in table 1 at appendix 1, there is sufficient budget to fund the top 3 ranked schemes, based on Option A which is the preferred option of the residents, at an estimated total of around £287,000. Therefore it is recommended that schemes at Chester Road and Colebrook Gardens, Loughton and School Lane, Abbess Roding progress to design and tender stage.

Future Funding

20. At its meeting on 10 March 2008, the Cabinet considered a report on the HRA five-year forecast and agreed that HRA balances be reduced and maintained within the range of £3m to £4m. This results in an additional £300,000 each year being available from 2009/2010 in the Capital Programme, which the Cabinet has previously concluded could be made available to fund further off-street parking schemes, and referred to the Housing Scrutiny Panel for detailed consideration.

21. The Housing Scrutiny Panel is recommending to the Cabinet that the additional HRA funding be made available for this purpose, and that this be match funded by around £288,000 per annum from 2009/2010 from the General Fund from capital receipts (agreed in principle at the last Cabinet Meeting), which would result in an additional £2.352 million being available over four years from 2009/2010. Using the average cost per bay from table 1 at appendix 1, this could provide around 335 additional parking bays at around 15 sites, based on a priority need as set out in tables 1 and 2 at appendices 1 and 2 respectively.

Resource Implications:

Existing budget provision of £288,000 made up of £161,000 HRA and £127,000 General Fund, together with and additional £300,000 HRA and £288,000 General Fund per annum for 4 years from 2009/10 making up an additional £2.352m

Legal and Governance Implications:

Housing Act 1985.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

None.

Consultation Undertaken:

Residents have been consulted on the design for the top 6 schemes. The consultation was based on 3 options, and the outcome is included in table 1 of appendix 1.

The Tenants and Leaseholder's Federation were consulted on the Vehicular Crossovers – 6 Metre Rule and the future funding for off street parking at their meeting on 13 March 2008 and supported the proposals.

Background Papers:

Assessment score sheets for each individual site, feasibility reports incorporating estimated scheme costs for each of the highest ranked sites undertaken by specialist Highways Consultants, and the results of the resident consultation exercise.

Impact Assessments:

An Equalities Impact Assessment is not necessary.

Table 1									
This table shows the number of residents who were consulted on each scheme, the percentage of council tenants included within the number of residents consulted and the percentage of residents who responded to the consultation exercise. Each resident was consulted with three design options A, B and C and the table shows the percentage of residents in favour of each scheme as well as the cost per bay for each of the options.									
Rank	Site	Assessment Score	Number of residents consulted	% of council tenants	% of consultation forms returned	% of residents in favour of design Option A	% of residents in favour of design Option B	% of residents in favour of design Option C	Total Scheme Cost for Option A
1	Chester Close	20	10	10.0	90.0	89.0	0.0	11.0	86,465.00
Number of bays in the design -						10	7	3	
Cost Per Bay - £						8,646.0	5,269.0	16,613.0	
2	Colebrook Gardens	19	28	21.4	100.0	89.0	0.0	7.0	129,591.00
Number of bays in the design -						27	23	14	
Cost Per Bay - £						4,800.0	6,637.0	2,727.0	
3	School Lane	17	6	83.3	100.0	100.0	0.0	N/A	70,707.00
Number of bays in the design -						9	6	N/A	
Cost Per Bay - £						7,856.0	12,265.0	N/A	
4	Harvey Gardens	17	24	33.3	75.0	67.0	6.0	6.0	150,754.00
Number of bays in the design -						25	17	8	
Cost Per Bay - £						6,030.0	5,424.0	8,996.0	
5	Audley Gardens	16	34	23.5	66.7	68.0	14.0	9.0	295,606.00
Number of bays in the design -						20	9	11	
Cost Per Bay - £						14,780.0	10,517.0	19,922.0	
6	Hillcroft	14	48	37.5	70.8	50.0	12.0	12.0	201,352.00
Number of bays in the design -						42	26	21	
Cost Per Bay - £						4,794.0	5,260.0	5,429.0	

OFF STREET PARKING RATING TABLE

Table 2			
<p>This table includes schemes that either originally featured on the list for possible off-street parking under the previous procedure operated by the Highways Section or have been added more recently. These schemes have been assessed under the new assessment procedure by the Housing Assets Section, but await a technical feasibility study and resident consultation.</p>			
Location	Area	Assessment Score	
Avenue Road	Theydon Bois	18	Streets/Areas subject to technical feasibility and resident consultation
Alderwood Close	Abridge	17	
Badburgham Court	Waltham Abbey	17	
Ladyfields Close	Loughton	17	
Fullers Close	Waltham Abbey	16	
Tillingham Court	Waltham Abbey	16	
Woodford Court	Waltham Abbey	16	
Grosvenor Close	Loughton	16	
Paley Gardens	Loughton	13	
Stanway Road	Waltham Abbey	13	
Foxley Close	Loughton	12	
Sudicamps Court	Waltham Abbey	11	
Blackmore Court	Waltham Abbey	10	
Bromefield Court	Waltham Abbey	10	
Shrublands close	Chigwell	10	
Theydon Court	Waltham Abbey	10	
Coles Green	Loughton	10	
Plumstree Mead	Loughton	9	
Skarning Court	Waltham Abbey	9	
Barnmead, Toot Hill	Toot Hill	8	
Wrangley Court	Waltham Abbey	8	
Bridge Hill	Epping	7	
Brooker Road	Waltham Abbey	0	
Buxton Road	Waltham Abbey	0	
Fairfield Road	Epping	0	
Gravel Close	Chigwell Row	0	
Green Glades	Theydon Bois	0	
Harold Crescent	Waltham Abbey	0	
Park Square	Chigwell Row	0	
Millfield	Ongar	0	
Millhoo Court	Waltham Abbey	0	
Princessfield Road	Waltham Abbey	0	
Pyrles Lane	Loughton	0	
Queens Road	North Weald	0	
St Peters Avenue	Ongar	0	
Walton Gardens	Waltham Abbey	0	

Winters Way	Waltham Abbey	0
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Table 3

This table includes schemes that have been omitted from the programme due to any combination of reasons including, not suitable for off-street parking, already having spaces installed in the past, there being no Council tenants, residents have rejected off-street parking or there is no longer a need.

Location	Area	Assessment Score
The Gladeway	Waltham Abbey	26
Ivy Chimineys	Epping	19
Hanson Drive	Loughton	18
Homecroft Gardens	Loughton	17
Mowbrey Gardens	Loughton	16
Chestnuts	Willingale	15
Elm Close	Epping Green	13
Queensway	Ongar	0
Monkswood Avenue	Waltham Abbey	0
Lodge Lane	Waltham Abbey	0
Prescott Green	Loughton	0
Barncroft Green	Loughton	0
Grosvenor Drive	Loughton	0
Ruskin Avenue	Waltham Abbey	0
Broomstick Hall Road	Waltham Abbey	0