

## **PARKING IN EFDC RESIDENTIAL AREAS**

### **Background.**

The Debden Estate was built on Garden Estate principles with large areas of green sward to provide an open aspect and areas for recreation. The roads were relatively narrow as are a number of the roads in other estates within the district and some other residential areas.

When the estate was designed car ownership was at a low level and it was never envisaged that car ownership would ever reach anything like current levels. The situation now is that car ownership is averaging more than one per family and there are no longer sufficient parking spaces on the roads or in designated parking areas for the number of vehicles.

Government initiatives to encourage more use of public transport is unlikely to change the situation, at least not until the cost of ownership becomes too prohibitive.

The Council's policy to date has been to try to ease the situation in places where land is available but, laudably, to preserve the green spaces as far as possible. It therefore strictly enforces guidelines regarding vehicle crossovers, for instance, despite more and more requests, some for quite compelling reasons such as a resident's disability.

### **Current Situation.**

Since residents are unable to park reasonably near to their properties due to congestion, narrow roads or no off-street parking they have, in many areas taken to parking on pavements (partially or wholly) and on the grass verges which, particularly in the winter months, quickly become rutted and muddy and the grass surface completely destroyed. This of course compromises the very purpose for which they were set up and also looks very unsightly.

At one time the Council attempted to repair damaged verges but have now virtually given up because the task has become too great and it is clearly a waste of resources if they are immediately destroyed again. Equally enforcement is piecemeal at best for lack of resources, nor is it helpful to residents to be driven off their road if there is nowhere else for them to go. It has become a constant source of aggravation and complaints from residents and it is beholden on the Council to respond as best it can.

Some work has been done on Council Estates to create more parking spaces but a closer study might reveal where further progress can be made, and little or no attempt to solve this problem has been carried out in other parts of the District.

Whilst this report has highlighted the Debden Estate it applies to several other estates as well as hot-spots in other parts of the District.

By ignoring the problem the Council is perceived by its electorate as ineffective and/or burying its head in the sand.

### **A Way Forward**

Nobody wishes to see a loss of green spaces but equally no-one wants to see the destruction of the verges and the unsightly mess that results.

It would appear that a compromise may be the only way forward and even though it can not provide a complete solution it might ease the problem in the worst affected areas and residents will at least feel the Council is trying to respond to their needs.

It is proposed that a survey is carried out in the District to ascertain whether actions could be taken to ease the problem in some areas by a number of potential solutions, for instance:

- Road widening to permit some parking where none is possible at present whilst minimizing the loss of green space and preserving pedestrians right of way
- Creation of parking bays where loss of green space would not be seen to damage the immediate environment
- Provision of grills through which grass can grow but which can support the weight of cars (this has been the solution used by other Councils).

Such a survey could only be carried out in a phased way and prioritized. For this reason it is proposed that the Debden Estate is targeted as the first priority area.

It is recognized that other initiatives may also help, such as time restrictions to stop commuter parking in residential streets, residents parking permits and stricter enforcement after the new provisions have been implemented. Some of these measures have been or are being considered near to High Street locations as part of an ongoing parking survey.

Clearly this will not solve all the problems but, carefully planned, it should be possible to create a more realistic parking regime without undue loss of green spaces whilst preserving the remaining spaces in a good condition.

#### **Costs**

The costs of implementing this are likely to be significant and therefore need quantifying before any decision can be made. It will also have to be phased across a number of years.

#### **Proposal**

If members feel this should be investigated it is proposed that it is taken up by O & S 2 and referred to PWG 2 for a feasibility study.