

Parking Consultation in Hawkenbury

A report by the Borough Councils Parking Manager to the Tunbridge Wells Joint Transportation Board on 15 February 2016

Introduction

1. Following a change in ownership of the old Land Registry building in Hawkenbury, frequent complaints have been made by local residents and retailers about parking related problems.

Background Information

2. AXA PPP acquired the ex Land Registry building on Forest Road, Hawkenbury in 2011. Since that time local residents have raised concerns about overspill parking from the site into surrounding residential streets.
3. Whereas the building was originally designed for the specific needs of the Land Registry they apparently never fully occupied it. This, and the fact that a number of staff lived locally, meant that there was always ample on-site parking for their requirements.
4. Because the building was already in an office use class, no planning consent was needed when AXA PPP acquired the building. Their needs were, however, different with staff often living farther afield.
5. It quickly became clear that there was insufficient car parking space available on site to satisfy demand and complaints started to be made by local residents who were finding it more difficult to park near their homes and in some instances experiencing an adverse impact on highway safety.
6. A proposal by AXA PPP to extend the building creating more office space was submitted in 2012 and subsequently approved subject to a number of conditions. One of the requirements imposed, via a S106 agreement, required the applicant to provide a sum of money sufficient to investigate any potential on-street parking problems resulting from the extended premises and additional levels of staffing and implement restrictions as appropriate.
7. The sum of £15,000 was due once work commenced on the office extension and this was secured during the summer of 2015.

Preliminary Works

8. Prior to receipt of the S106 funding, some waiting restrictions were introduced to address the more pressing parking issues in the Hawkenbury area. These took the form of double yellow lines at and near junctions plus a small number of time limited waiting bays adjacent the retail premises on Forest Road and at the Nelson Road/Dorset Road junction.
9. Since those restrictions were implemented in October 2014, a number of ongoing complaints have been received about the impact of AXA PPP staff parking in residential streets. The situation has been monitored to determine whether the issue is one of highway safety or inconvenience.

Consultation

10. Once S106 funding became available, work commenced on producing a consultation letter for distribution amongst local residents. This was designed to gather information about what were considered to be the main parking related issues

11. The consultation was distributed on 30th November 2015 to 586 households. A copy of the letter is attached at Appendix A. The consultation ran until 11 January this year and 260 responses were received.
12. The fact that responses were provided by 44% of those consulted underlines the strength of feeling in respect of parking in Hawkenbury.
13. Responses were analysed and a summary is attached at Appendix B. From the comments made, it is clear that local residents feel that there are not only parking related problems at present, but also concerns that these will be worsened as and when the extended premises become occupied.
14. It is relatively easy to deal with problems which arise out of potentially hazardous parking – i.e. at or near junctions or where traffic flow may be unnecessarily impeded. Double and single yellow lines can be introduced to prevent parking at inappropriate times subject to completion of a statutory consultation process.
15. It is less easy to deal with issues of inconvenience to local residents. Often, complaints are made about parking in a residential street where there is no demonstrable harm to users of the highway. The starting point for consideration of any parking restriction is that the public highway is available equally to all and that residents have no more right to park in a street than anybody else.
16. Waiting restrictions which are designed to give priority in any form must fall within the terms of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. Where resident priority parking is concerned, this is often given as being that the restriction will minimise circulating traffic.
17. Although non-resident parking can often be attributed to general factors such as proximity to a railway station or local shops, it is unusual for it to be caused by a single employer as is the case in Hawkenbury.
18. This has certain benefits in that we are able to discuss concerns more readily with the business causing the problem and come to agreement on some matters, but also some dis-benefits in that local residents seem less willing to accept a permit parking scheme which is (claimed to be) only required because of overspill parking from one business.

Proposed Course of Action

19. To address concerns over parking in potentially hazardous locations, a small number of additional lengths of double yellow and single yellow lines are being proposed in the first instance. These will require a formal consultation process and consideration of comments/objections.
20. The current level of interest being expressed in a permit parking scheme is inconclusive. This will be explored further, concentrating on those roads where the level of interest is highest.
21. That further consideration be given to additional restrictions as and when AXA PPP fully or substantially occupy the extended building and any impact on roadside parking can be properly assessed.

Recommendation

22. That members endorse the proposed course of action.

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