

Proposed Permit Parking Scheme in Hawkenbury, Tunbridge Wells

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Originating Authority	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
Final Decision Taker	Kent County Council
Exemption	Non-exempt
Classification	For Recommendation

Recommendation:

- That the Board endorses the proposed introduction of parking restrictions as per the amended proposal outlined in this report and if more than 5 objections are received, these be reported back to this Board.

INTRODUCTION

At the 15 February 2016 Board meeting a report was presented detailing a preliminary consultation in respect of parking issues in Hawkenbury. That report and the associated minutes are included at Appendix A. This report outlines what actions have been taken since that meeting and recommends amendments to the proposed waiting restrictions that take into account views submitted during the consultation process.

ACTIONS TO DATE

Waiting restrictions introduced

To deal with the more pressing highway safety issues, a traffic regulation order was advertised and subsequently implemented during August 2016. This imposed new double yellow lines, principally in the Camden Park area. Further double yellow lines to address safety concerns that have arisen since then are in the process of being advertised.

Second survey of resident's views

Taking the results of the preliminary survey, a detailed proposal for restrictions in Hawkenbury was formulated. This was circulated to nearly 600 homes during October 2016.

The subsequent level of response was disappointing with comments received from only 111 households – a 19% response rate. A summary of those replies is given at Appendix B on a road by road basis.

THE PROPOSAL

Because the issues relate primarily to overspill parking from the AXA office block, it is daytime parking in residential streets which has caused most concern. Taking views previously expressed, proposals were put forward which provided a range of additional restrictions.

These included areas of permit parking, sections of single yellow line where parking would be prohibited between specified hours and additional double yellow lines where parking would be potentially hazardous. Details are contained at Appendix C.

THE RESPONSE

As indicated, there were fewer replies than hoped for. There were, however, in most streets enough to form a reasonable impression of what was favoured.

Of the 111 responses, only 16 expressed an outright rejection of the proposals or raised substantial doubts about their potential effectiveness.

The bulk of those who replied either simply endorsed the proposals or requested clarification or amendments. In the latter case, responses have been categorised as neutral/positive if the suggested alterations could be accommodated, at least in part.

NEGATIVE REPLIES

Common themes running through the responses which have been categorised as negative were that no problem was currently experienced and that AXA should be solving any problems created by their staff, with residents not wanting to pay for permits to park near their homes.

The cost issue is covered in a subsequent section of this report.

Of those who indicated that they had no problem some had off-street parking facilities and others appeared to be away from home during the day so did not witness any issues.

REQUESTS FOR AMMENDMENTS

Those asking for changes to the overall proposal were, understandably, mainly concerned about the impact on the road where they lived, either because a restriction was proposed for that street or because proposed restrictions in other streets would almost inevitably result in parking migrating to their road.

Based on the comments made it is considered appropriate to amend proposals as follows:-

Road	Existing Proposal	New Proposal
High Woods Lane & Chester Avenue	None	Single yellow line both sides. Restriction as per rest of scheme
Rookley Close	None	Single yellow line both sides. Restriction as per rest of scheme
Dorset Road	Minimal junction protection – i.e. double yellow lines	Permit parking on south-west side. Single yellow line on north-east side
Nelson Road	Permit parking on east side. Single yellow line on west side	Permit parking on east side. Double yellow line on west side
Napier Road	Partial permit parking. Remainder either double yellow lines or unrestricted	No unrestricted parking. All either permit parking or double yellow lines.
Forest Road	In vicinity of AXA, permit parking on south-east side. No restriction outside AXA on north-west side.	Both sides in vicinity of AXA to be permit parking. Some double yellow lines at Sibby's Corner
Hawkenbury Road	Mainly either single or double yellow lines. Small section of permit parking.	Increase amount of permit parking on section between Forest Road and Boundary Road Lay-bye area at end of Westbrook Terrace would be restricted to permit parking
Boundary Road	Plan did not correspond with description.	Permit parking on north side and single yellow line on south side with the exception of the central circle where permit parking would be allowed on both sides.
Maryland Road	Double yellow lines only at northern junction with Hawkenbury Road	Extend double yellow lines southwards on western side
Forest Way	Junction protection	Single yellow line on south side to junction with Lambourn Way
Whybourne Crest	Junction protection	Remainder of road to be single yellow line. Restriction as per rest of scheme

ROADS WHERE PROPOSAL TO REMAIN UNCHANGED

Of the 22 roads covered by the survey, it is recommended that the formal proposal remain unchanged from that already consulted on. These roads are:-

Camden Park/The Meads/The Shaw – Although the responses varied with some not wanting less permit parking and others wanting all permit parking and no single yellow lines, the general view seemed to be that the proposal best served the needs of these three roads.

Beech Close – Although now an adopted road, there was minimal interest in permit parking and no current evidence of a problem

Cleeve Avenue – No responses from residents. No current problem but will need to be monitored if it remains unrestricted.

Farmcombe Road/The Chase – See comments in respect of Banner Farm estate below.

Hawkenbury Close – Although two commented that they did not want the single yellow line, to omit it would almost certainly result in parking issues arising in the street due to its close proximity to the AXA premises. If objections persist, it can be dropped after the formal consultation.

Teise Close – Some doubts expressed about need but generally proposal found favour.

Westbrook Terrace – Those who responded wanted to protect parking in the off-carriageway area in Hawkenbury Road. This can be done – see comment in previous section of report.

THE COST OF PERMITS

A question asked by several respondents was, why should they pay for permits when issues have only arisen since AXA occupied the old Land Registry building?

There are a number of points which could be made in response to this, the first being that in an unrestricted street, nobody has priority where parking is concerned. The public highway is just that – public, and it is irrelevant whether you live in the street, work nearby or are visiting the area. In law, all have equal rights to use the highway.

Only when restrictions are imposed can this balance be changed. Since restrictions cost money to introduce and maintain, charges need to be made if one user group will benefit from that restriction. As previously indicated, AXA have funded the research necessary to reach the current stage of developing a scheme and the money secured through a Section 106 agreement will also go some way to implementing any proposals.

Currently, all resident parking permits are charged for at the rate of £60 per annum but approval has been given for an increase to £80 for Tunbridge Wells town centre zones. If a permit zone is implemented in Hawkenbury, it is intended that permits should be offered at the £60 per annum rate.

HAWKENBURY FARM

Comments were made questioning the motivation for extensive restrictions on Hawkenbury Road and asking whether this was being done to facilitate development yet to be granted planning consent.

Hawkenbury Farm is, however, an allocated site and whether or not the current application receives consent it is probable that the site will be developed within the next few years.

Notwithstanding that point, Hawkenbury Road is a through route and already carries a noticeable amount of traffic. The present levels of parking do at times impede flow to an unsatisfactory extent and, regardless of any potential development, restrictions would have been proposed.

The proposed restrictions do, however, allow for the anticipated increase in use if and when development takes place, although it is likely that further restrictions would be necessary should the development go ahead. They would need to be funded by the developer of the Hawkenbury Farm site.

BANNER FARM ESTATE

Although the residents of Banner Farm estate were not consulted in respect of the current proposals, it is accepted that greater levels of parking now take place on the estate and in particular at southern end near its junction with Forest Road.

The recently adopted Parking Strategy includes, within its implementation programme, a review of resident permit parking zone A. There is a strong likelihood that this zone will be expanded to include the Banner Farm estate. This will, however, need to be the subject of a consultation exercise and it is anticipated that this will take place early in the 2017/18 year.

To address the most pressing concern in respect of the AXA and Banner Farm issues it is proposed that the current Hawkenbury scheme should include double yellow lines on both sides of Farmcombe Road of sufficient length to remove any safety concerns near the Forest Road junction. At the time of writing, it was hoped that this proposal for additional double yellow lines could be brought even further forward through use of the KCC Combined Members Grant.

THE WAY FORWARD

The next stage in the process of implementing restrictions is to advertise a Traffic Regulation Order. This would allow comment from all interested parties whether or not they are resident in the area.

It is anticipated that this could result in AXA employees objecting on the basis that they will be forced to park further away or have to choose a different form of transport. Neither of those would be valid reasons for rejecting the proposal. Neither KCC nor TWBC have any obligation to provide parking facilities.

All objections do, however, have to be considered so, in the event that more than 5 objections were to be received, a further report would need to be brought to the April Board. If there were to be less than 5 objections, these would be considered by the KCC Cabinet Member.

If proposals were to be endorsed, a Traffic Regulation Order would be made and implemented, probably towards the middle of the year.

CONCLUSION

A parking issue has been identified and a proposed course of action consulted on with local residents. Although response rates were poor, sufficient support was received, sometimes with suggested amendments, to warrant the advertising of proposed new waiting restrictions which include areas of permit parking.

Appendices to the Report

- Appendix A – February 2016 JTB Report
- Appendix B – Summary of comments
- Appendix C – Drawing showing Proposals