

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.

Contact Officer: Nick Baldwin – Senior Engineer, TWBC Parking Services

Parking in Hawkenbury Survey

To enable us to better understand the issues which may be of concern in respect of on-street parking, it would be appreciated if you could answer the following questions:

Which road do you live in?

Do you consider there to be parking problems in your road?

Yes

No

If so, are your concerns related to highway safety or lack of parking for residents?

Safety

Parking

Both

If the issue is highway safety, is the problem an all day/every day occurrence?

Yes

No

If the issue is availability of on-street parking, do problems persist overnight?

Yes

No

If the issue is availability of on-street parking, are there problems at weekends?

Yes

No

Do you favour the idea of permit parking for residents?

N.B Residents incur an annual charge for permits, currently set at £60

Yes

No

This survey continues on reverse.

Parking in Hawkenbury Survey

Do you have any further comments to make?

This survey has been sent to all addresses in the roads highlighted below.



Do you agree that this fully covers the area potentially affected by overspill parking from AXA PPP?

Yes

No

If no, which other roads should have been included?

Q1 Do you consider there to be a parking problem in your road

Q2 If so are your concerns related to highway safety or lack of parking for residents

Q3 If the issue is highway safety, is the problem an all day/every day occurrence

Q4 If the issue is availability of on-street parking, do problems persist overnight?

Q5 If the issue is availability of on-street parking, are there problems at weekends?

Q6 Do you favour the idea of permit parking for residents?

Road name	Yes	No	Safety	Parking	Both	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Beech Close	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Boundary Road	10	1	1	2	7	7	1	2	7	2	6	6	5
Camden Park	18	0	8	0	10	12	6	0	11	2	9	10	8
Chester Avenue	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4
Cleeve Avenue	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
Dorset Road	18	2	2	3	13	10	5	5	11	6	10	6	14
Farmcombe Road	3	0	0	1	2	2	0	2	1	2	1	2	1
Forest Road	28	6	3	5	20	15	8	6	19	9	16	19	15
Forest Way	3	5	1	0	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	4	4
Hawkenbury Close	12	2	3	2	7	10	0	3	5	3	6	5	9
Hawkenbury Mead	5	1	0	2	3	2	1	2	3	2	3	2	4
Hawkenbury Road	23	2	4	0	19	13	10	1	18	7	12	9	16
High Woods Lane	1	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
Maryland Road	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	2
Napier Road	26	5	2	11	13	8	7	15	8	15	9	15	16
Nelson Road	22	2	0	7	15	11	4	15	6	17	4	14	10
Polesden Road	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Rookley Close	2	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	2
Teise Close	17	1	3	0	14	14	3	1	12	0	13	11	7
The Meads	6	0	2	0	4	6	0	0	4	0	4	3	3
The Shaw	12	0	3	0	9	8	4	1	8	1	8	8	4
Whybourne Crescent	5	1	3	0	2	3	2	0	2	0	2	2	4

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County Councillor King, brought the discussion to a conclusion and summarised the options. There being a consensus, Members were asked whether the resolution was agreed.

RESOLVED – That the Board endorse the Parking Strategy 2016-2026 subject to the reservations expressed by Councillor Bulman and supported by the Board being taken into consideration by the Cabinet.

PARKING CONSULTATION IN HAWKENBURY

TB38/15

Nick Baldwin, Senior Traffic Engineer, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, introduced the report which included the following comments:

- The report followed an informal consultation undertaken in the Hawkenbury area related to parking issues since the occupation of the old Land Registry building by AXA PPP.
- The intention was to take on comments received and consider potential changes to alleviate some of the worst problems.
- The report summarised the feedback received by the survey and recommended that it form the basis of more specific proposals for a further informal consultation ahead of a statutory consultation.
- The Board were asked to endorse this course of action.

Councillor Tracy Moore, Borough Councillor for Park Ward, had registered to speak.

Councillor Moore noted that the results of the survey was consistent with her own findings from when she had conducted a residents' survey shortly before being elected. The number of responses clearly demonstrated the level of concern, particularly with the prospect of an enlarged AXA PPP. The view expressed in paragraph 15 of the report which explained that residents had no more legal right than any other road users to park on a public highway was not a view held by residents nor elected representatives and the staff of one employer should not be allowed to affect residents ability to park near their homes. Although the results of the consultation were inconclusive, members were urged to support the recommendation to progress this matter.

Councillor Bulman agreed that this was a key matter for the residents of Hawkenbury, it had recently been reported that parking was often not only inconsiderate but sometimes dangerous. This issue had been a problem for a long time and it was expected to be exacerbated by the forthcoming enlargement of AXA PPP. Urgency was called for.

County Councillor Scholes supported the comments of the previous speakers and added that parking had been a constant problem even with the Land Registry before AXA PPP. It was a regular source of complaints and urgent action was needed.

The Chairman, County Councillor King, invited further questions and comments. There being none, Members were asked whether the resolution was agreed.

RESOLVED – That the proposed course of action as set out in the report be endorsed.