

Agenda Item No: 8
Report To: Joint Transportation Board
Date: Tuesday 11th September 2012
Report Title: Willesborough Lees Safety Scheme Proposals
Report Author: Ray Wilkinson, Engineering Services Manager



Summary: This report presents details of the proposed Willesborough Lees safety scheme for the consideration by the Board prior to taking the scheme to formal public consultation. The scheme is aimed at addressing unsafe and obstructive parking practices, primarily generated by overspill parking from the William Harvey Hospital, in residential roads around the periphery of the existing Zone F controlled parking zone.

Key Decision: YES

Affected Wards: North Willesborough

Recommendations: **The Board be asked to:-**

Approve the proposed safety scheme for formal public consultation

Financial Implications: To be funded by the County Member's Highway Member Fund

Other Material Implications: The introduction of any restrictions will require ongoing enforcement and maintenance commitments.

Background Papers: 'Prioritised List of Requested Parking Controls for Investigation and Possible Implementation' report to JTB 13th March 2012

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Purpose of the Report

1. This report presents details of the proposed Willesborough Lees safety scheme for consideration by the Board prior to taking the scheme to formal public consultation. The scheme is aimed at addressing unsafe and obstructive parking practices, primarily generated by overspill parking from the William Harvey Hospital, in residential roads around the periphery of the existing Zone F controlled parking zone.

Issue to be Decided

2. The Board is asked to consider the proposed safety scheme and either recommend its progression to formal public consultation, or request amendments to the proposals or recommend the scheme be halted.

Background

3. In 2006 a controlled parking zone was introduced in those residential roads within a 500m radius of the William Harvey Hospital. The controlled parking zone consisted of 'no waiting at any time' restrictions in those locations unsuitable for parking and the installation of parking bays elsewhere. The parking bays were made subject to a 2 hour limited waiting restriction between 08:00-22:00 Mon-Sat. This scheme was intended to address both the unsafe and obstructive parking practices taking place and to provide residents (many of whom had no off-street parking provision) with a greater opportunity to find parking in the vicinity of their homes.
4. While the introduction of this scheme saw a dramatic decrease in the number of parking complaints received in the area, commuter parking slowly began to encroach into those roads on the periphery of the scheme which had previously been considered to be located at too great a distance from the hospital to attract overspill parking. It is believed that this trend is likely to be the result of:-
 - (a) an intensification of use at the William Harvey Hospital with a greater number of staff being based at the site following reorganisation within the East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust with some staff having to travel much further to work as a consequence, and,
 - (b) the Hospital's approach to the issue of on-site parking permits meaning that some staff denied a permit are still using the car to travel to work but are parking their car outside of the 500m radius and completing their journey by a short walk.
5. In October 2011 a meeting was held between EKHUFT, ABC, KCC H&T, Stagecoach and the Highways Agency in order to discuss the current issues and draw up potential solutions to the parking issues. It was acknowledged

6. that no single 'easy' solution was likely to be available but that a multi pronged approach would be necessary.
7. Three approaches were identified for further investigation at the meeting, these were:

- (a) The introduction of a safety scheme in those roads affected by overspill parking.

It was agreed by all parties that a scheme consisting of 'no waiting at any time' restrictions at junctions, bends etc should be investigated and developed in order to discourage unsuitable and obstructive parking in those residential roads currently experiencing parking congestion as a result of hospital staff parking demand.

- (b) The provision of additional parking on the William Harvey Hospital site.

The potential provision of additional parking facilities at the William Harvey Hospital in order to better meet parking demand was discussed, notwithstanding that no approach has been made to the Council as Local Planning Authority for the development of additional car parking areas.

There were concerns expressed by the Highway Agency however that such a move would increase the number of employees driving to work, encouraging staff away from alternative modes of transport. This could place greater pressure on the nearby Junction 10 pushing demand figures beyond the Junction's theoretical capacity.

Concerns were also expressed that the approach could also undermine the Hospital's Travel Plan which seeks to ensure an appropriate balance between parking facilities for visitors and parking facilities for staff, with the latter carefully managed through the parking permit system that is in place. It should be noted that paragraph 36 of the National Planning Policy Framework identifies that Travel Plans are a key tool where developments generate significant amounts of movement.

- (c) Improvements to the bus services serving the William Harvey Hospital.

The bus operator suggested a number of improvements to the bus services serving the hospital. These included improving the frequency of the no. 10 service (providing a direct link to both the town centre and Folkestone) and linking this service with the no. 510 (renamed 10X) service (running between Maidstone and Ashford town centre) so that alternate buses ran through from Maidstone to Folkestone. These improvements were subsequently delivered in April 2012 as part of the Bus Quality Partnership undertaking.

In addition the bus operator suggested improving the 'C' Line service to provide a 2 way loop service or alternatively extending the 517 service either of which would reduce journey times from Kennington to the hospital from approximately 45 mins to 10 mins. The bus operator did however explain that this option would require kick start funding because patronage would need to be given the opportunity to build up before the service became commercially viable.

8. Following this meeting further meetings have been held between ABC and EKHUFT in order to attempt progress these proposals.
9. In the interim the safety scheme proposal was included in the prioritised list of requested parking controls which was agreed by the Board at their meeting of 13th March 2012.

The Issues

10. In the last 3 years there have been an escalating number of complaints received from those residential roads located on the periphery of Zone F. While these complaints are in part the result of residents' intolerance of non-residential parking, there have been various reports detailing specific incidents of dangerous or obstructive parking.
11. One such incident involved a vehicle parked in Wilson Close which obstructed the refuse truck, preventing it from exiting the road. The police were called and on this occasion the vehicle issued with a fixed penalty notice.
12. Consideration does however need to be given to a number of small businesses located within the identified area which rely heavily on the availability of on-street parking in the vicinity of their premises for employees, customers etc. These businesses (e.g. Hooden on the Hill PH, Silverhill Road) would be severely impacted by the wholesale removal of on-street parking.

Scheme Type Considerations

13. When considering the introduction of parking restrictions it is important to remember that the primary function of the highway network is the facilitation of the flow of traffic along its length. However it is recognised that on-street parking is a valuable resource and therefore it is common practice to tolerate parking wherever it does not cause a significant danger or obstruction. As a publicly maintained facility and in view of the value of on-street parking, it is necessary to ensure that the availability of parking is both maximised and fair. This is particularly important in those locations where parking demand is high and where it provides a vital resource to one or more user groups.
14. It is also vital from a Council perspective that a fair and consistent approach in line with government legislation and guidance is maintained across the Borough in order to ensure that decisions are defensible and can be seen to be rational and even-handed.

15. Another point which must be considered is that the Highway Code provides guidance to motorists on where is or is not suitable to park. In roads without restrictions these rules are generally followed, with motorists using their judgement in assessing the suitability of a given location for parking. It is only when competition for parking becomes significant that motorists tend to exhibit less judgement and take greater risks in selecting their parking location.
16. The introduction of parking restrictions in such circumstances is however a double edged sword. Although the presence of a restriction clearly indicates that a location is unsuitable for parking and enables Civil Enforcement Officers to attach penalty charge notices to vehicles found parked in contravention of the regulations, it also tends to reduce motorists' inclination to make an independent assessment of the suitability of an area of kerb space for parking. Instead the motorist tends to rely on the presence or absence of a restriction to indicate whether a location is suitable or not. An unrestricted length of carriageway within close proximity of a restricted section is therefore more likely to be parked upon regardless of whether it is suitable or not for parking.

Parking Management

17. In those locations where there is direct competition between 2 or more user groups, and where at least one but not all user groups have no reasonable alternative but to utilise the on-street parking it may be necessary to give that group(s) priority in finding a parking space through the introduction of a parking management scheme. An example of this approach can be seen in the adjoining parking zone F where the carriageway is divided into those areas suitable for parking (delineated by parking bays) and those which are not (subject to double yellow lines). The parking bays are subject to a 2 hour limited waiting restriction between 08:00-22:00 Mon-Sat with optional annual residents' and daily visitor exemption permits available.
18. It should be noted however that this approach comes at the cost of flexibility. While in an unrestricted road residents may choose to park or allow visitors to park their vehicle across their driveway, this is not possible in a parking management scheme where all locations must be designated as either suitable or unsuitable for parking - marked either with parking bays or double yellow lines. In addition the introduction of a parking management scheme requires signage at 30m intervals in the footway/verge behind the lengths of parking bays indicating the applicable restrictions.
19. In relation to this investigation however, the majority of residential properties located within the scheme area have off-street parking provision. As such there is little need for residents to park on-street and therefore little direct competition between residents and non-residents. In these circumstances there is insufficient justification for the introduction of a parking management scheme.

Single Yellow Line Restrictions

20. A suggestion has also been put forward for the introduction of a single yellow line restriction extending throughout the roads concerned and operational for 1 hour in the morning and 1 hour in the afternoon on weekdays with signage at 30m intervals indicating the hours of restriction. While this approach would discourage commuter parking, it is again difficult to justify. This solution would prohibit parking even in those locations suitable to do so – not only preventing commuters from utilising on-street parking and therefore negatively impacting on the businesses but also inconveniencing residents / residents' visitors / trades people requiring on-street parking during those hours. Further to this, the introduction of a single yellow line effectively indicates that parking at the location concerned outside the hours of restriction is condoned - which would obviously not be the case in respect of junctions, bends and where the road is too narrow to safely accommodate parking on both sides.

No Restrictions

21. Another option is simply to leave the roads unrestricted. This approach has the advantage, as discussed above, that motorists are more liable to use their judgement in assessing a potential parking space in these circumstances. Where restrictions are present there is a tendency to assume that if those locations subject to restrictions are unsuitable for parking, then any nearby locations without restrictions must be suitable. However this approach would obviously not alleviate the issues identified in the complaints received both from residents and the bus operator but it would be more likely to avoid the risk of exacerbating them.
22. While the police have powers to enforce against any vehicle parked in such a way as to cause a danger or obstruction regardless of the presence of parking restrictions, this is obviously not the case for Civil Enforcement Officers who are limited to enforcing contraventions against parking restrictions indicated by signs and lines. Since the introduction of decriminalised parking enforcement in 2000 however, the police have withdrawn their dedicated parking enforcement officers and enforcement against vehicles causing a danger or obstruction is now a relatively low priority. This approach therefore relies primarily on self enforcement although an approach could also be made to the police to request that they target any locations where a particular problem is identified.

Safety Scheme

23. The final and recommended scheme type for this area is a simple safety scheme consisting of double yellow lines in those locations unsuitable for parking - around junctions and bends etc. This scheme would discourage unsafe or obstructive parking while leaving those locations which are suitable for parking available for the use of all thereby dealing with safety and movement concerns while having a minimal impact on those who need to park on-street (residents and their visitors and trades people, commuters etc).

The Proposals

24. As discussed above it is proposed to introduce a safety scheme consisting of double yellow lines protecting those locations where parking would cause a danger or obstruction – around junctions, bends etc. Consideration has been given to the extent of the scheme and the natural boundaries of spread have been identified. The scheme therefore extends to the north and west of the existing Zone F.

Conclusion

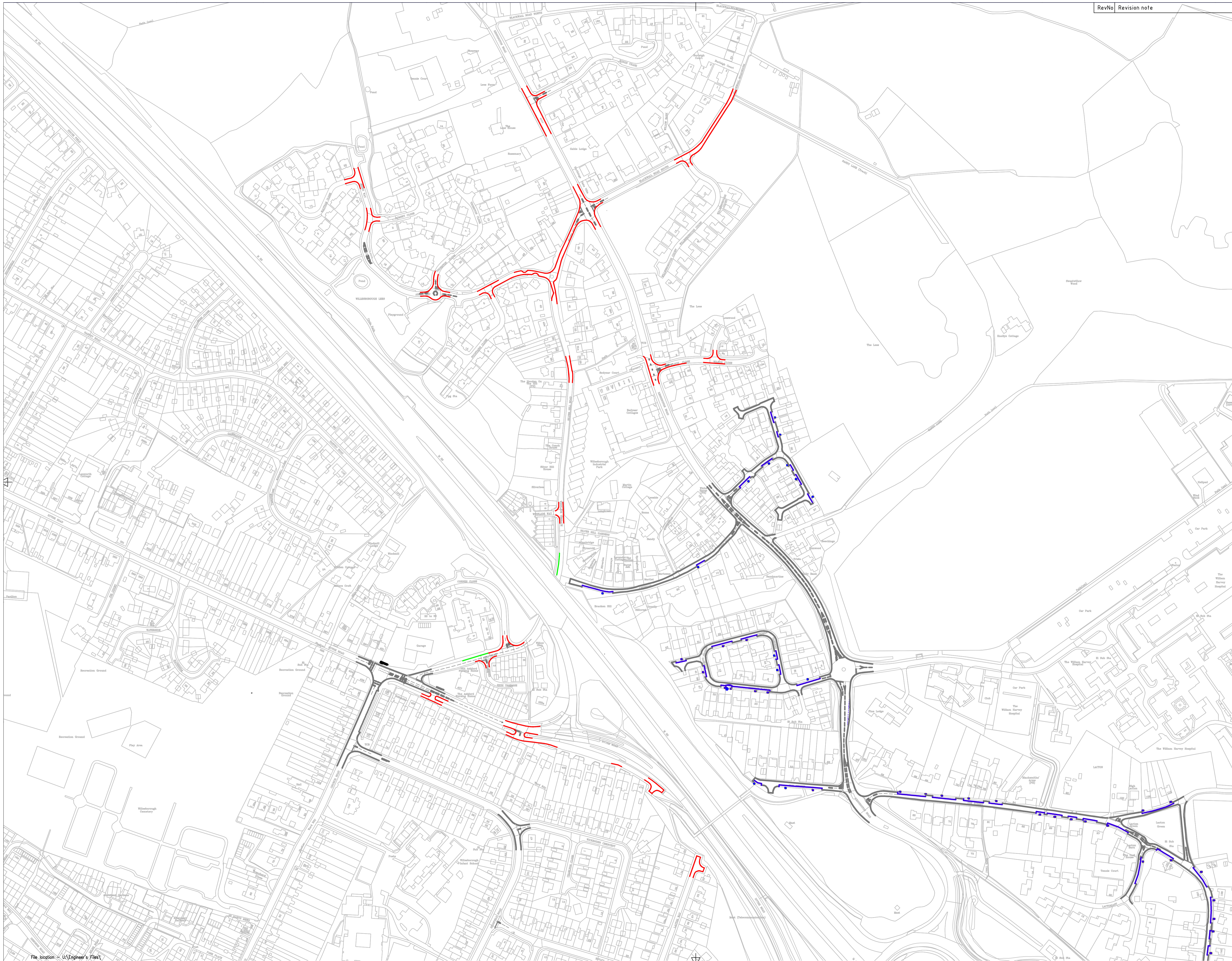
25. While other avenues are being pursued in respect of minimising the on-street parking demand generated by the William Harvey Hospital, it is essential that the issue of unsafe / obstructive on-street parking be dealt with directly. This is particularly true given the issues surrounding the potential introduction of additional on-site parking.

Portfolio Holder's Views

26. The Portfolio Holder's comments are not available at the time of publishing this report and will be provided verbally at the meeting.

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RevNo	Revision note

Date	Signature	Checked

NOTES

POSITION OF RESTRICTIONS ARE SHOWN INDICATIVELY. THE EXACT EXTENT OF THE PROPOSED RESTRICTIONS IS DESCRIBED IN THE ACCOMPANYING TRAFFIC ORDER.

KEY

PROPOSED NO WAITING AT ANY TIME	—
EXISTING NO WAITING AT ANY TIME	—
EXISTING BUS STOP CLEARWAY	—

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PROJECT WILLESBOROUGH LEES HIGHWAY SAFETY SCHEME	
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