

Agenda Item No: 9
Report To: The Joint Transportation Board
Date: Tuesday 11th September 2012
Report Title: Goat Lees Safety Scheme Proposals
Report Author: Ray Wilkinson, Engineering Services Manager



Summary: This report presents details of the proposed Goat 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 Eureka Business Park, in adjoining residential roads on Goat Lees.

Key Decision: YES
Affected Wards: Boughton Aluph & Eastwell

Recommendations: **The Board be asked to:-**
Approve the proposed safety scheme for formal public consultation

Financial Implications: This scheme is to be funded by the Parish Council

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 Goat 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 Eureka Business Park, in adjoining residential roads on Goat Lees.

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 2010, following complaints from residents regarding nuisance parking generated by the Eureka Business Park upper terrace site, the Ward Member placed a request for the investigation of this issue with a view to introducing parking restrictions. A survey was subsequently carried out in February/March 2011 in Aylesbury Road, Dunnock Road, Hurst Road, Muscovy Road, Siskin Close and Snipe Close in order to ascertain both the frequency of unsuitable parking (i.e. parking in locations where it was liable to cause a danger or obstruction) and the proportion of on-street parking generated by non-residents. The surveys were conducted over 3 weekday mornings between 08:30 – 10:00 (the time at which residents reported the problem to be greatest). In addition a 4th survey was conducted on a Saturday between midnight and 01:00 in order to establish which vehicles recorded during the daytime surveys belonged to residents. It was assumed that any vehicles recorded in the Saturday survey belonged to either residents or their visitors enabling the vehicle registrations recorded in the weekday surveys to be divided into resident and commuter parking.
4. In addition to the parking surveys, the police also conducted a number of patrols in order to identify any vehicles parked in unsuitable locations with a view to issuing either formal cautions or fixed penalty notices to any vehicles causing a danger or obstruction.
5. The results of the surveys did not however provide sufficient evidence to justify the pursuit of a safety scheme. During ABC's surveys only two vehicles were identified as being parked in a location where it was liable to cause a danger or obstruction. Similarly the police only issued two advisory notes (to the same vehicles as identified in the surveys). The total volume of vehicles parked on-street was also well within the safe capacity of the roads.

6. Residents continued to express concerns however and the new (post April 2011 local election) Ward Member, with the backing of the Parish Council, therefore placed a request in 2011 for the issue to be re-examined. The request was therefore placed on the Prioritised Scheme List for 2012/13 which was subsequently approved by the Board at the meeting of 13th March 2012.

Sources of Parking Demand / Parking Issues to be Addressed

Eureka Business Park's Upper Terrace Site

7. Obviously the primary issue, and catalyst for the initiation of the investigation, is overspill parking from the upper terrace of the Eureka Business Park into neighbouring residential roads on Goat Lees.
8. Eureka Business Park was designed and planning permission granted at a time when government policy advocated under providing parking (i.e. providing fewer spaces than necessary to meet the anticipated unrestrained demand) combined with the provision of green travel plans and developer funded cycleway and public transport improvements in order to encourage the use of alternative forms of transport. This approach has however since been relaxed in response to the realisation that at many sites a lack of off-street parking facilities is liable to result in an increase in on-street parking pressure in nearby roads rather than a wholesale move toward alternative forms of transport.
9. Following encouragement from ABC, construction of an additional 150 space on-site car park at Eureka was brought forward to alleviate the pressure on local roads, opening in Summer 2011. Subsequent to the introduction of the car park there has been a significant reduction in the level of on-street parking demand within Goat Lees. It is understood however (from both site visits and anecdotal evidence received from residents) that parking demand is not constant. Although most days experience a relatively low 'background' demand, occasionally the roads are subject to much heavier on-street parking demand, corresponding with training / seminar / meeting events take place at businesses on Eureka Business Park. Even on these peak demand days however, there remains sufficient kerb space to safely accommodate all the vehicles on the roads in Goat Lees - although occasional unsuitable parking has been observed.

Goat Lees Primary School

10. An additional anticipated source of on-street parking demand in the area is Goat Lees Primary School. Despite objection from ABC, planning permission for the Goat Lees Primary School was granted by KCC with 19 staff parking spaces and a drop off / pick up point for parents / carers consisting of 3 spaces plus an additional 2 disabled spaces.

11. Although the opening date has been deferred in response to delays at the construction stage, it is anticipated that once open the site will generate significant on-street parking demand at the beginning and end of the school day. It is therefore proposed to take the opportunity presented by the investigation (initiated in response to overspill parking from the Eureka Business Park) to introduce safety restrictions to address the anticipated issues associated with the school at the same time.

C Line Bus Route

12. In addition to the more general unsuitable parking practices associated with the above issues, Hurst Road, Rothbrook Drive, Grosvenor Road and Towers View are located on the C Line bus route. The bus operator has expressed their concerns regarding obstructive parking along this section of route and asked for the introduction of 'no waiting at any time' restrictions to deal with the problem. Although outside the initial area of investigation in respect to Eureka Business Park overspill, these roads are located nearby and it is therefore proposed to combine the restrictions in a single scheme in order to minimise costs.

The Towers School & Sixth Form Centre

13. Although parking restrictions are already in place in a number of roads in the vicinity of the school, complaints have been received from Freathy Lane and Jersey Close residents regarding unsafe parking practices just beyond the current extent of the restrictions resulting from parent / carer and student parking. Again, these roads abut the Eureka Business Park overspill area and therefore are logical addition to the rest of the scheme.

Economic Considerations

14. Eureka Park is a major business park within Kent comprising in excess of 300,000 sq ft of built business space with outline consent for a further 1,100,000 sq ft
15. Approximately 700 jobs have been created at Eureka Business Park since 2007 through the development of North Down phase 1 a 50,000 sq ft office development, Eureka Place neighbourhood centre, and Herald a 35,000 sq ft office building.
16. The business park has continued to attract occupiers during the last 5 years in challenging economic markets through the provision of good quality speculative office space. Occupiers have been attracted to Eureka Business Park from other parts of Kent including Maidstone and Kings Hill, creating a new dynamic in the Ashford office market.
17. The Economic Development Manager at Ashford Borough Council has had discussions with some of the businesses at Eureka Business Park over the issues of parking. These businesses have taken up spaces in the additional 150 space car park, have implemented green travel plans promoting car sharing and some businesses are utilising capacity at their other sites within Ashford. Views have been given that implementing parking management

restrictions in neighbouring residential areas would have a detrimental impact on the businesses in Eureka Business Park unless viable alternatives such as public car parks or park and ride schemes are developed to serve the area.

18. 25,000 sq ft of offices were completed at North Down phase 2 in the Autumn of 2011. One of the two buildings has now been let to RIFT Ltd facilitating the expansion of this local business, which won Business of the year in the 2012 Kent Invicta Chamber Business Awards. For the future economic success of Eureka Business Park and the Borough it is essential that a balance be achieved in regulating parking in this area that allows the business park and its occupiers to prosper.

Scheme Type Considerations

19. 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.
20. It is also crucial 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.
21. 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.
22. 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 which is unsuitable for parking but within close proximity to a restricted section is therefore more likely to be parked upon than a similar section of carriageway not located within the vicinity of restrictions.

Parking Management

23. 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 parking zones D-G 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.
24. 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 a 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 which causes some degree of visual intrusion on the street's aesthetic.
25. In relation to this investigation however, all residential properties located within the scheme area have off-street parking provision. Those properties located on the 'bird' estate generally have a more generous level of parking provision than those on the 'cattle' estate. The houses on the 'bird' estate generally have their casual visitor space within their own curtilage. The properties on the 'cattle' estate generally have their casual visitor spaces provided on a communal basis in parking courts or on-street. With properties sharing casual visitor spaces fewer spaces are required to meet the simultaneous. The parking provision on both estates complies with the agreed standards. 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 no justification for the introduction of a parking management scheme.

Single Yellow Line Restrictions

26. 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 acceptable 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

27. 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 rather avoid the risk of exacerbating them.
28. 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 they target any locations where a particular problem is identified.

Safety Scheme

29. 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, parents / carers etc).

The Proposals

30. 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. Consideration has been given to the extent of the scheme and the natural boundaries of spread from both Eureka Business Park's upper terrace and Goat Lees Primary School have been identified. This effectively constitutes the 'bird' estate to north-west of Trinity Road and the 'cattle' estate to the south-east of Trinity Road. Two separate areas have been added to address unrelated problems on the nearby bus route along Rothbrook Drive, Grosvenor Road and Towers View and the roads affected by overspill parking from The Towers School & Sixth Form Centre.

Conclusion

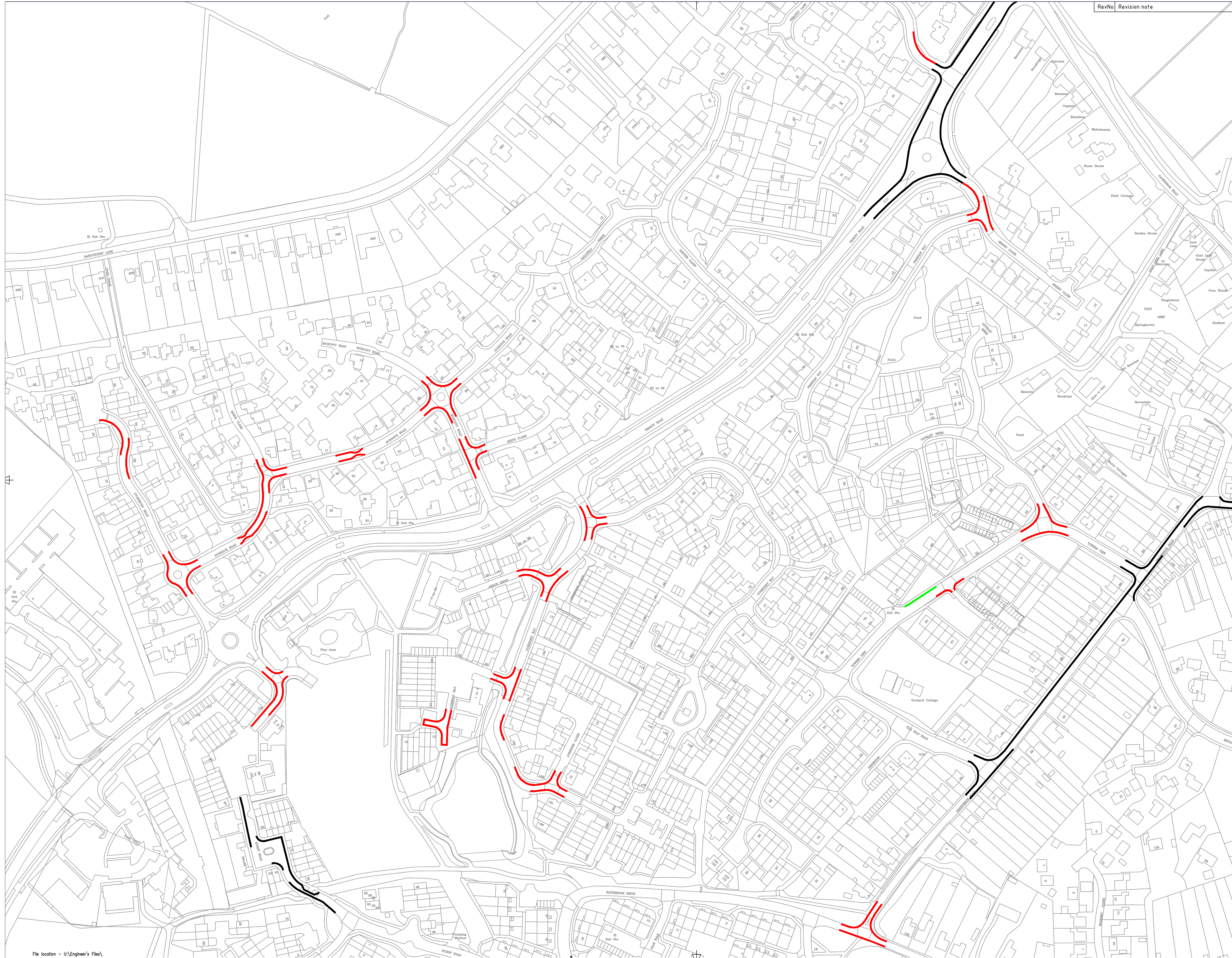
31. As discussed above, the current level of on-street parking is relatively low and easily accommodated with peaks taking place only on those days when businesses on the Eureka Business Park have events attended by staff from other premises. The unsafe / obstructive parking taking place is the result of a small minority of individuals failing to use proper care in selecting a location to park. It is however anticipated that the opening of the Goat Lees Primary School will increase on-street parking demand at the beginning and end of the school day and with it the risk of unsuitable parking practices in those locations within easy walking distance of the school. In respect of the problem locations identified by the bus operator on the C Line bus route and residents experiencing overspill from The Towers School & Sixth Form Centre these again are the result of a small minority of individuals parking irresponsibly.
32. The introduction of the proposed safety scheme would have the advantage of addressing both the existing and anticipated issues in a single sweep without significantly impacting on road users including residents, employees and parents / carers / students.
33. Should the Board approve the scheme for consultation and the scheme subsequently be implemented a review will be carried out within 12 months of implementation in order to assess the success of the scheme and identify any remaining / emerging issues.

Portfolio Holder's Views

34. 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
 GOAT LEES, ASHFORD
 HIGHWAY SAFETY SCHEME

DRG/TITLE
 EXTENT OF PROPOSED RESTRICTIONS

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