

Meeting:	Transport and Road Safety Advisory Panel
Date:	30 November 2005
Subject:	Policy Related to the use of “Ghost Capes” at Junctions.
Responsible Officer:	Steve Swain, Interim Head of Public Realm Infrastructure, Urban Living
Contact Officer:	Paul Edwards, Principal Engineer West Area Transportation Team
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Phil O’Dell, Environment and Transport
Key Decision:	No
Status:	Part I

Section 1: Summary

The council continues to receive reports of dangerous and/or obstructive parking at junctions. Because of the order making process double yellow lines are expensive and the procedure for providing them lengthy. An alternative is the provision of “ghost capes”, which can be implemented relatively quickly and at little cost. The council’s current policy on “ghost capes” rarely allows their implementation. This report recommends that the policy be amended.

Decision Required

That the panel recommends that the portfolio holder agrees that “ghost capes” may be provided at junctions where regular parking in their proximity significantly interferes with driver visibility and safety and/or regularly causes access difficulties for refuse collection or emergency services vehicles.

Reason for report

To review the current policy on the provision of “ghost capes”.

Benefits

The revision of the policy will enable the council to respond positively to reports of dangerous and/or obstructive parking at junctions thereby demonstrating the council’s desire to address the concerns of their customers and to improve road safety.

Cost of Proposals

“Ghost capes” can be provided for approximately £400. This figure includes staff time and works cost and all costs will be contained to existing traffic management budgets.

Risks

The proliferation of “ghost capes,” which are advisory (not enforceable), might lessen their effectiveness.

Excessive use might be seen as an unacceptable level of “street clutter”.

Implications if recommendations rejected

The reported levels of parking at junctions will continue and customers who report the problem may perceive a lack of willingness by the council to address their concerns.

Section 2: Report

2.1 Brief History

- 2.1.1 The council's current criteria for the assessment of requests for the provision of "ghost capes" was agreed by the October 1993 meeting of the Traffic and Transport Sub-Committee and reconfirmed by the committee of May 1997.
- 2.1.2 The above criteria requires that the following be complied with before markings are implemented:
- (a) There must be at least three reported personal injury accidents related to sight line problems in the last 36 month period and;
 - (b) The clear visibility distance as shown in PPG 13 would be impeded by parked cars; or
 - (c) There are access difficulties caused to emergency service vehicles.
- 2.1.3 It was also agreed:
- (a) That officers be delegated powers to relax the criteria if deemed appropriate, but where necessary to report to the Environment Portfolio Holder and;
 - (b) That marking be installed by the Director of Professional Services under delegated powers.
- 2.1.4 The council continues to receive a significant number of reports of parking congestion as levels of car ownership continue to increase. Many of these reports highlight dangerous and/or obstructive parking at junctions.
- 2.1.5 Parking close to junctions limits the visibility of drivers moving from minor to major roads, with consequential road safety implications.
- 2.1.6 Parking close to junctions can also make it difficult for vehicles to negotiate the junction, causing traffic delays. This applies particularly to larger vehicles, for example refuse collection vehicles, fire engines and ambulances.
- 2.1.7 Often, parking close to junctions increases levels of driver discomfort, sometimes to levels of anxiety. Many of the drivers report the problem to the council and are disappointed when informed that the council is unable to provide yellow lines.
- 2.1.8 It is an offence to park anywhere that would put other road users at risk or obstruct the free flow of traffic. Paragraph 217 of the Highway Code lists examples of dangerous parking and the list includes parking "opposite or within 10 metres of a junction."

- 2.1.9 Referring to the council's current policy outlined in paragraph 2.1.2 above it can be seen that the criteria does not permit the provision of ghost capes unless 3 personal injury accidents have been recorded in the preceding 36 months and that all three must be related to sight-line problems. The above criteria are rarely met and many reports of problem parking at junctions do not result in positive action by the council.
- 2.1.10 The previously agreed criteria was designed to limit the number of locations that qualify for 'ghost capes.' This was because of concern that because the markings are advisory (not enforceable) their proliferation might lead to lower levels of compliance from drivers. It was considered that compliance would be greater if their use was restricted to the worst cases.
- 2.1.11 However, as parking pressures in the borough continue to grow it is felt that the compliance advantages of rarity need to be balanced against the growing number of problem junctions and the large number of requests received for council action to improve conditions.
- 2.1.12 This report discusses the merits of revising the criteria to enable the council to respond more positively to reports of dangerous and/or obstructive parking at junctions.

2.2 Options Considered

Double Yellow Lines

- 2.2.1 Double yellow lines are an effective deterrent to illegal parking, they are easily enforced and motorists tend to avoid parking on them.
- 2.2.2 Unfortunately, due to the legal procedures involved, the process of implementation of double yellow lines require a high resource input and is lengthy. Whilst this is an appropriate and effective solution within controlled parking zones, it is not for a large number of isolated junctions.

Ghost Capes

- 2.2.3 Ghost capes can be provided relatively quickly and at little cost, demonstrating the Council's willingness to respond to customer reports of problems.
- 2.2.4 Ghost Capes have no legal status but would normally be provided where it is clearly unsafe for vehicles to park. A police officer is able to penalize a driver who parks a vehicle unsafely.
- 2.2.5 Observation of existing junctions, where 'ghost capes' have been provided suggests that drivers mostly avoid parking on them. However, it is clear that in areas of severe parking congestion, where drivers have no alternative parking within reasonable walking distance, some will park on the 'ghost capes.' It is these areas where, ultimately, double yellow lines may need to be considered.

2.2.6 Road markings will add to “street clutter” but white markings might be considered less obtrusive than yellow ones. Any addition to “street clutter” must be balanced against the need for safety, amenity and functionality of the public highway.

2.2.7 It is therefore recommended that the criteria for ‘ghost capes’ should be revised as follows:

Ghost capes may be provided subject to evidence of regular parking in proximity to a junction that significantly interferes with visibility of drivers using the junction safely and/or causes regular access difficulties for refuse or emergency services vehicles.

2.3 Consultation

2.3.1 The final draft of this document was circulated for comment to relevant technical staff, nominated members of the Traffic and Road Safety Advisory Panel and the police service. As a result the report was amended, where appropriate, before submission to the Traffic and Road Safety Advisory Panel.

2.3.2 For the implementation of ‘ghost capes’ it is proposed that frontagers would be notified in advance of implementation.

2.4 Financial Implications

2.4.1 The cost of provision of ghost capes at a single junction is estimated at £400. This cost would be met by the Traffic Management Budget, subject to the availability of funds. This report is to review the policy related to the provision of “Ghost Capes”.

2.5 Legal Implications

2.5.1 None

2.6 Equalities Impact

2.6.1 The proposals have been prepared having regard of the Council’s Corporate Equality Plan.

2.7 Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Considerations

2.7.1 The proposals have been prepared having regard of good design practice in respect of Section 17 of the above act.

2.7.2 The ghost capes will increase the awareness of drivers that parking at the location might constitute an offence under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

Section 3: Supporting Information/ Background Documents

APPENDIX A: Drawing of typical Ghost Cape.

Background Documents:

The minutes, report and decision notice of The Traffic and Road Safety Sub-Committee of 21st May 1997.