

Hatch End town centre: congestion, parking and loading review – stakeholders' meeting
7:30pm, 29th July 2010, Belmont Room at Hatch End Arts Centre

Chair: Cllr Susan Hall – Hatch End ward

Councillors: Cllr Jean Lammiman – Hatch End ward
Cllr Stanley Sheinwald – Hatch End ward

LBH Officers: Paul Newman – Team Leader, Parking & Sustainable Transport
Andrew Saffrey – Project Engineer, Parking & Sustainable Transport

Apologies: Cllr Phil O'Dell – LBH, Portfolio Holder for Environment & Community Safety
Angela Dias – Harrow Association of Disabled People
Phil Grant – LBH, Car Parks Manager
David Eaglesham – LBH, Traffic & Highways Service Manager
Barry Philips – LBH, Traffic & Road Safety Team Leader
John Docherty – London Fire Brigade
Ian Polush – London Overground
Neil Corfield – Metropolitan Police, NW London Area Traffic Management Unit

Attendance: 60

Proceedings:

SH thanked people for attending and commented on the large turnout at the meeting. PN explained that three pots of funding had been made available for issues in Hatch End: loading bays, congestion relief, and parking controls in the service roads and car park. These sources of funding are for the 2010/11 financial year (current year). SH then explained the purpose of the meeting was to listen to local people's concerns so that action could be prioritised, and she then opened the floor for questions.

A member of the Hatch End Association (HEA) expressed concern that funding for parking controls had been earmarked without any consultation having taken place. SH explained that consultation requires funding, and therefore consultation cannot take place until funding has been allocated. Funding is allocated in response to requests from residents and businesses, and it can be a number of years before funding is made available and might be available again, as other areas are also in the queue to be consulted. The money has to be allocated, even if no proposals materialise, as this is sensible from an accounting point of view. If nothing emerges from the consultation, the unused budget can be allocated to other schemes on the waiting list.

A member of Hatch End Traders' Association (HETA) asked for clarification on what a CPZ (Controlled Parking Zone) entailed. Although a full CPZ at this stage was not envisaged, SH explained that a CPZ is introduced if and where the majority of residents are in favour of a permit-only parking zone, usually for one hour a day, which has the effect of removing all-day commuters from normally residential streets and cause the minimum inconvenience to residents and their visitors.

A member of HEA commented that she was worried about displaced parking if controls were introduced in the service road. She also asked if all residents in a CPZ needed to buy a permit. SH clarified that only vehicles parked in the hour(s) of control would require permits. Residents who took their cars to work during the day and returned home in the evening would not therefore require a permit if a CPZ were to be in place.

A member of Nugent Park Residents' Association (NPRA) asked whether a CPZ would be the outcome of the meeting. SH emphasised that the meeting was about more issues than simply solutions like a CPZ. A CPZ would only deal with some of the problems, and therefore it was important to hear about other issues and concerns to identify what solutions would be apposite.

A member of NPRA asked whether 100% of all loading activities could be accommodated in the businesses' rear service roads. A council officer explained that this was unlikely on account of the congestion and loading study which identified frequent occurrence of "illegal loading" on the main carriageway, especially at the bus stops, and on the footway. A member of HETA argued that he felt all loading was satisfactorily accommodated and was not causing congestion. A member of NPRA asked for this statement to be minuted.

A member of HEA asked if the proposals to introduce pay and display parking were a fait accompli. SH stated that it was not for her to decide as she is no longer in a position to make the decision, but gave her view that if it were up to her she would probably introduce it.

A member of HETA then questioned the purpose of the meeting. SH answered that it was to listen to the problems so that officers were aware of the wider issues that need to be addressed.

A resident of Hillview Road asked who called the meeting. SH stated that officers, who were following the agreed programme of the Traffic and Road Safety Advisory Panel (TARSAP) distributed the initial invitations to businesses and residents along Uxbridge Road, but that she was pleased that a wider audience had attended. As a ward councillor and leader of her party she had been asked to chair the meeting.

A resident of Lutyens Lodge complained that vehicles are left outside that address (on the service road) for a number of weeks at a time, and that these vehicles appeared to include commercial vans. The resident commented that they couldn't understand how people were able to use the shops if this kind of parking is taking place.

A businesswoman operating on the southern parade acknowledged that parking was a problem and that businesses' own vehicles and those of their staff did clog up the available parking spaces. However, she stated that her five staff did not feel safe using the car park and used the service road whilst recognising it would be more convenient if her customers could park directly outside her premises or at least nearby if staff cars were parked elsewhere. She commented that there was smashed glass in Grymsdyke Road car park and instances of vandalism, and called on CCTV to be installed and for police patrols. She asked where her staff would park if the parade was not available to them. SH stated that councils are not obliged to provide parking for businesses, and that other town centres have commuter car parks which are paid for by their users. SH said she would speak to the relevant council departments and the safer neighbourhood team to raise the crime and disorder issues of the car park.

A resident of Wellington Road complained of great difficulty accessing and emerging from her driveway because of the density of parked cars and that cars were parked for more than one day. She was worried that parking controls in the service road would force even more parking into residential roads.

A resident above the shops commented that many shops had three flats above and extensions built on rear courtyards where previously parking could be accommodated. She added that no more extensions or flat conversion should be permitted. SH advised that in some instances, the council has refused permission only for it to be granted on appeal by the Planning Inspector.

A resident of Westfield Park added that planners had always assumed the car park would take any strain of additional development.

A resident of Cornwall Road complained that emergency service access is inhibited by the volume and location of parking.

A resident of Hallam Gardens stated that he had carried out a survey in the early 1980s that showed 75-80% of vehicles parked in the town centre were there for more than 6 hours, and didn't think much had changed over the intervening years. He acknowledged it is a difficult situation to manage and suggested a system of parking meters with 1 hour free parking, but that there could be many different solutions. He commented that the traffic situation is disastrous and that the cycle lanes had compounded problems. He suggested that two westbound lanes should be available as far as the junction of Grimsdyke Road, and that the additional lane would store right-turning vehicles. He commented that any changes need to be properly policed. SH stated that she would ask officers to look at that junction to see if capacity could be improved.

Dave West of London Buses stated that there is a problem with loading, and that the ability to adequately serve disabled / elderly passengers was compromised by buses being unable to properly access the kerb side as a result of obstructive loading activity. Lunchtime appears to be the worst time of day, and the road is effectively reduced to a single lane because of vehicles loading both sides of Uxbridge Road.

A resident of Grimsdyke Road stated that there is a need to calm traffic in that road as people speed through. They also reported that motorists and cyclists ignore the traffic lights at the crossing and go through even when pedestrians have a green signal.

Another resident of Grimsdyke Road complained that not enough enforcement of the existing restrictions at the junction with Uxbridge Road takes place. Emergency access is compromised by cars parking both sides when there is only room to park on one side, and therefore a double yellow line should be placed along one whole side.

A resident complained that Blue Badge holders park all day on Grimsdyke Road, the section between the car park access and Uxbridge Road.

Another resident suggested that the junction of Uxbridge Road and Grimsdyke Road should have traffic signals with pedestrian phases instead of just the Pelican Crossing, which is in the wrong place. SH said that might cause more congestion as previous studies had predicted, however officers would model the junction again to determine feasibility.

A resident of Wellington Road stated that the Silverlands care home is being redeveloped and expanded but without additional staff parking. Changes to the type of residents at the home would require additional staff and that this might compound parking shortage on-street. SH said a CPZ might help address this problem.

A resident of Uxbridge Road complained about the problems around Tesco, in particular people rat-running through the service road. The resident asked the service roads could be blocked to manage this.

A resident stated that the land in front of Tesco was supposed to have been adopted and that it should be blocked off to prevent speeding along the service road. SH confirmed from a recent meeting that it was private and therefore it fell within Tesco's control.

Another resident questioned why the No Entry signs outside Tesco had been taken down. SH stated that this was because there was no legal Traffic Management Order (TMO) to back them up, and that this issue would be dealt with as part of any proposals taken forward.

A resident suggested making the service roads contra-flow one-way to prevent rat-running along their entire length. SH stated that this could be looked at.

A member of HEA complained that Tesco deliveries blocked the service road and indeed these lorries stick out into the main carriageway.

A member of HETA stated that the invitation to the meeting referred to the council having initial ideas and asked what these were. SH replied that the important thing was to listen to local people first.

Anthony Wood of Harrow Public Transport Users Association highlighted the benefit of such stakeholders' meeting for the council to gather the issues, concerns and views of residents and businesses. He highlighted the three biggest issues as being:

- The need to widen the westbound lane
- The delays caused by the Pelican Crossing but a pedestrian crossing facility could not be removed.
- The need to better accommodate vehicle turning movements at the junction of Uxbridge Road and Grimsdyke Road.

AW added that as a resident of Pinner he had given up shopping at specialist businesses in Hatch End because of the lack of parking availability. He stated that traders needed to balance their customers' needs above those of their staff.

A resident of Wellington Road asked for surveys to be carried out. PN stated that duration of stay parking surveys had been carried out last year.

A resident of Grimsdyke Road complained that turning out of Grimsdyke Road is difficult and that people abuse the waiting restrictions adjacent to Pickwick Walk. Large trucks also perform three-point turns in the car park entrance and also reverse into private driveways to complete such manoeuvres. SH said she would ask for more enforcement to be carried out and for officers to look at the problem of large vehicles turning around.

A resident of Felden Close felt that delivery vehicles were a source of congestion, as were indeed private motorists stopping on the main carriageway to visit the bank. However, he recognised the dilemma that a clearer road would invite drivers to travel faster. He was worried that the whole area needed to be looked at and not just one junction [Uxbridge Road / Grimsdyke Road] in isolation as traffic patterns may change as a result, e.g. Altham Road and Hallam Gardens. SH stated that the wider view was the intention of the scheme, and indeed the stakeholders' meeting provided for issues beyond the apparent initial scope to be made known to officers and councillors.

A resident of The Avenue who is a retired traffic engineer commented that on-street parking creates problems right across London, and that it is a waste of road space and a contributory factor in congestion and many accidents. He said that people should be encouraged to park off-street. He knows for sure that many cars parked during the day in The Avenue belong to commuters who use the railway station. Some people even leave their cars there and go away on holiday. He didn't think traffic volumes are high enough to justify full signalisation of the junction of Uxbridge Road and Grimsdyke Road, but that a mini-roundabout might better cater for the turning movements. This last comment was greeted with disapproving murmurs. He added that the cycle lanes were pointless if people could still park in them.

A member of Lutyens Lodge Residents' Association (LLRA) stated that they had been promised an ambulance bay or a ban on parking outside the entrance to that property in order to serve the elderly people living there. Presently vehicles park all day right along the service road, leading to relatives, minibuses and other transport vehicles being unable to drop-off or collect frail or disabled residents directly outside the doorway.

A resident of Hillview Road expressed concern about more vehicles parking in that street. Parking is a problem at school times, causing congestion, and there are often conflicts of vehicle movements. Parents park badly outside schools and nurseries, and there are never any SNT officers to keep order. SH agreed that parking around most schools is deplorable and that SNTs spend a lot of time around many schools in the borough. These issues are not isolated to Hatch End. The resident asked why the mobile CCTV vehicle is not seen in Hatch End and SH said she would raise this with them.

The same resident asked if residents would be informed if a CPZ were introduced. PN clarified that the stakeholders' meeting was very much the initial step, and that the issues to be discussed were not limited to controlled parking, but also congestion and loading problems. Further consultation would follow if proposals are taken forward, which – if agreed – would then be followed by statutory consultation.

A resident of Wellington Road complained about congestion and double-parking as a result of school buses dropping off at the Bus Stop near Dove Park.

A member of HEA said that there are no crossing markings where school children cross over the dual carriageway section near Westfield Park especially when accessing the station.

A member of HETA attributed the congestion to the cycle lanes, which had led to the reduction in right-turning capacity. HETA is concerned that both businesses and residents need to be benefited by whatever is taken forward and warned that it's not possible to please all people all of the time. Residents and businesses want real solutions, and not just added problems and extra cost. SH reassured the audience that the loading bays and capacity enhancements were budgeted out of existing schemes. Only a CPZ – if agreed – would cost the end user, as permit parking schemes are required by law to be self-financing. It is therefore up to residents to decide if they wish to have a CPZ. Permits are charged for to pay for the cost of enforcement and verifying if permit applicants are eligible.

A resident asked how CPZ are funded. SH replied that the cost of consultation and implementation comes from the council's capital programme, and the cost of running the scheme is recouped via permit charges and pay and display ticket revenue. Only residents and businesses within the CPZ are eligible for permits.

A resident requested that the Bus Stops should be inset to keep the main carriageway clear. PN explained that initial investigations had shown that there is a substantial number of underground services, including a major gas main, under Uxbridge Road and in particular the northern footway.

A member of NPRA enquired about the two Bus Stops either side of the junction of Uxbridge Road with Nugents Park, explaining that they cause problems when both are in use. [One is a terminal stand for the H14, the other a through stop on the H12 route]. The member asked what jurisdiction TfL has in creating new Bus Stops and what legal obligations they are under to consult. DW explained that in effect TfL has no restriction on where it can place Bus Stops, but in reality they work with partners – in particular local authorities and the Police – to locate Bus Stops in the best possible locations. TfL is under pressure to improve the service to its customers, and receives numerous requests to relocate or create new Bus Stops.

A member of NPRA asked whether a CPZ could cover a private road. PN explained that this was possible, but only if the council had the agreement of all the landowners, which usually in practice is difficult to obtain.

A resident of Hallam Gardens suggested that Grimsdyke Road could be widened at its junction with Uxbridge Road. The resident also requested that the double yellow lines be extended and properly enforced as drivers currently park on the single yellow line all day.

Another resident said that any double yellow lines should also have loading restriction to stop obstructive loading and Blue Badge holder parking.

A resident said that it isn't the case that all the parking is taken up by traders, and there is still a large turnover of parking spaces. The resident also asked what the position of the Conservatives would be if they were in administration. SH said that it was probable that the Conservatives would charge, and that only two car parks in the borough are free [Grimsdyke Road and Belmont]. Therefore, the council is effectively subsidising Hatch End and Belmont as these car parks have a maintenance cost. However, SH emphasised that it is not for the Conservatives to decide.

A resident said that station commuters don't use the Grimsdyke Road car park, but park in Dove Park.

Another resident complained about a tree impinging visibility as drivers emerge out of Grimsdyke Road into Uxbridge Road. The resident also suggested banning right-turns to ease congestion and therefore force drivers to use the roundabouts to turn around to access side roads. SH said that this might cause more traffic, as it would add more trips within the local network.

A member of HETA said according to survey commissioned by Harrow Council in 2009 that only 12% of parking is for over 6 hours.

A resident requested that a speed camera be installed. SH explained that cameras are not installed by the council but by the London Safety Camera Partnership. Their criteria required there to be three or more Fatal or Serious Injury collisions within three years. AW added that the Police can however carry out enforcement, and in fact some enforcement was carried out following the recent fatal collision on Uxbridge Road.

A resident suggested having speed activated signs if cameras were not possible. SH acknowledged this, but warned that these are effective only for a short period of time as drivers get used to them, and therefore they need to be moved around frequently.

A resident of Hillview Road complained about drivers jumping the lights. PN explained that the council meets regularly with the Police to raise such issues so that the Police's limited resources can be targeted at areas of residents' concerns. The Police and the council automatically jointly investigate all fatalities, and that this is yet to take place.

Another resident stressed that it is important for pedestrians to be able to cross the road, and that the green time should not be shortened for pedestrians.

Another resident stated that the council must consult residents on a CPZ if parking charges were to be introduced on the Broadway and in the car park. SH said that a two-stage consultation normally takes place to ensure all residents are given a chance of joining a CPZ.

A resident in Hillview Road asked if there were any plans for a CPZ, and said they didn't feel a CPZ was needed.

A resident from Northwood stated that the CPZ recently introduced there works excellently. PN added that only residents who need to park all day need a permit.

Another resident said the consultation would effectively be blackmail: a choice between paying for a permit, or suffering all-day commuter parking. The scheme is only about money and CCTV would be better for all concerned. Why should people have to pay? SH stated that everything costs money. If parking is already bad, then displacement shouldn't be a problem. SH emphasised that displacement was likely, and therefore why the council generally goes back to residents after about 6-12 months to review parking zones.

A resident asked if a single yellow line restriction would just be effective. SH said that this has been done elsewhere – namely Canons Park station area – and now residents complain that because they have no bays, they have nowhere to park on street during the one hour of control. PN said that this kind of solution is obsolescent as now even households with off-street parking will use some on-street space, and therefore providing on-street resident permit bays is more convenient.

A member of the Pinner Association said that a small CPZ is merely a starting point, and that having been involved in the first Harrow CPZ in Pinner, this area has now grown to nearly 1 ½ miles in diameter. SH said the volume of commuter parking is the governing factor in how large a CPZ needs to be.

A resident complained that refuse vehicles can no longer gain access in certain roads.

Another resident asked how many permits residents can have. PN said that there is no limit, but the cost increases for each permit, although 5th and subsequent permits are charged at the same rate as the 4th.

A business representative asked about the timescale. SH stated a timescale was unknown as the new administration has not committed to a CPZ, however it normally takes at least a year to go through the consultation and implementation process. PN added that consultation on the loading bays and parking in the service roads / car park would start in October, for implementation by March/April 2011.

Another resident asked if Uxbridge Road could become a Red Route. PN explained that only TfL-controlled roads could be Red Routes.

A business representative asked if the notes of the meeting would be conveyed to the Labour administration. SH said that they would. A representative asked that it be noted that there was concern that there was nobody from the administration present.

Another business representative asked what the council's ideas were. SH stated that there are no right or wrong answers.

A business representative asked about how a "majority" decision is taken when businesses are involved. Do the traders have a say? SH said that all views are taken into account, but ultimately the car park costs money to maintain and the council is under pressure to cover or reduce its costs.

A member of HETA said that businesses were prepared to pay towards to maintenance of the car park in order for it to be free. SH said that they do not own the car park, and that the new administration promised to help traders: charging to park will prevent all-day parking and therefore promote better turnover of spaces and allow more people to come into the area to shop.

Another business representative said that the traders DO own the car park via the tax they pay. SH said that the residents also pay for the car park via taxes and that the council has to take a balanced view.

Someone asked if the council charges rent to BT for the telephone exchange. SH and PN did not know the answer.

A businessman said that there is obstruction caused by parking at the eastern end of the service road at the junction of Anselm Road. SH said that this would be looked at.

SH closed the meeting by thanking all those who had attended and who provided very valuable information that would be taken away and analysed.

Meeting closed at 9:28pm