

Crime and Disorder Select Committee

Councillor Call for Action: Obstructive and Illegal Parking around Whitehouse Primary School

**Final Report
December 2019**

Crime and Disorder Select Committee
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Church Road
Stockton-on-Tees
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Acknowledgements

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- Councillor Julia Cherrett – Elected Member (Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree Ward)
- Councillor David Minchella – Elected Member (Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree Ward)
- Joanne Roberts (Transport Strategy and Road Safety Manager) – Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC)
- Marc Stephenson (Community Protection Service Manager) – SBC
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- Shona Randle (Head Teacher) – Whitehouse Primary School
- All residents and parents who provided their views as part of this investigation

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Foreword

This report reflects the Crime and Disorder Select Committee's investigation of the Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) regarding Obstructive and Illegal Parking around Whitehouse Primary School.

Concerns relating to problem parking in the vicinity of schools are widely recognised as a national issue, and whilst this CCfA focused on one particular educational establishment, the Committee was mindful throughout its deliberations that similar scenarios could be found at many of the schools across the Borough. That said, Whitehouse Primary School has a number of factors which exacerbate this issue, and this piece of work allowed the Committee to explore these elements and seek the opinions of those affected by parking in and around the school.

We are very grateful for the input of all relevant parties during the course of this investigation, from the comprehensive account of action given by the school itself, to the contributions of nearby residents and the views provided by parents / carers during the visits to the school by members of the Committee. This is a very difficult issue to address, but we hope that the recommendations within the report can further encourage responsible parking and, critically, contribute to the safety of the school's pupils.



Cllr Pauline Beall
Chair
Crime and Disorder Select Committee



Cllr Paul Weston
Vice-Chair
Crime and Disorder Select Committee

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines the findings and recommendations following the Crime and Disorder Select Committee's investigation of the Councillor Call for Action regarding Obstructive and Illegal Parking around Whitehouse Primary School.
- 1.2 A Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) provides Councillors with the opportunity to ask for a discussion to take place at scrutiny committees on issues where local problems have arisen, and where all other methods of resolving the issue have been exhausted. The CCfA process is designed to be a last resort and may not provide an immediate solution.
- 1.3 A CCfA was submitted by Cllr Julia Cherrett and Cllr David Minchella in July 2019 regarding Obstructive and Illegal Parking around Whitehouse Primary School. This request was considered by the Council's Executive Scrutiny Committee on the 23rd July 2019, where it was resolved that the CCfA be approved and referred to the Crime and Disorder Select Committee for further detailed exploration of the issues raised at its meeting in October 2019.
- 1.4 The desired outcomes of the CCfA were outlined as follows:
 - more action to be taken against illegal parking, in particular more positive enforcement action with penalty notices issued
 - the consideration of measures such as
 - possible walk-to-school routes
 - a Resident's Parking Zone
 - a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) which can be used to ban or regulate any activity in public spaces which the Local Authority believes has a 'detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality' (Havering Council have introduced school parking PSPOs and Gateshead Council are in the process of implementing a pilot PSPO project)
 - no dispersal of the problem to neighbouring roads, which are already experiencing parking issues
- 1.5 In considering the desired outcomes that were outlined as part of this CCfA, the Committee reflected on the fact that school parking issues were prevalent around most schools across the Borough, often exacerbated by the general proliferation of cars over the years. Pertinent to the problems associated with Whitehouse Primary School was the increase in pupils from beyond the designated admission zone and the geographical nuances of the school, factors which are extremely difficult to influence. Whilst greater enforcement of illegal parking would be welcomed (at all schools), restrictions around current enforcement resources hinders the Council's ability to penalise such activity as much as many would like. It would also be unfair to single out one school above others for increased enforcement patrols.
- 1.6 After careful consideration of the evidence provided, the Committee concluded that the introduction of a PSPO in the vicinity of Whitehouse Primary School would not be appropriate due to a number of factors including:
 - it is not a 'forever' measure (has to be removed if problems cease, which could lead to issues reoccurring)
 - it would simply disperse the problem to nearby roads

- it may lead to other schools / Councillors in the Borough making requests for a similar deterrent (thereby creating a cost pressure)
- it could 'criminalise' parents for doing the 'school run'

An overriding issue was that the current extensive restrictions around the school were not able to be enforced enough, so adding further 'engineering' would not solve this, yet would require significant installation costs.

- 1.7 The Committee's view on the introduction of a PSPO was also influenced by the experiences of Havering Council who have indicated their desire to remove their existing PSPOs on the basis that they are not backed by the Department for Transport (DfT), they do not exempt disabled drivers, and the low number of penalty charges subsequently issued has not helped cover the significant implementation costs incurred by the Council as originally anticipated. Instead, the Committee agreed a number of alternative measures which both supplemented previous work on this issue, and provided further means of promoting more responsible parking around the school itself.

Recommendations

The Committee recommend that:

- 1) The commitment of Whitehouse Primary School's Chair of Governors to send termly correspondence to parents / carers regarding parking issues / updates is endorsed.**
- 2) Whitehouse Primary School distribute a 'walkzone' map (e.g. Appendix 1) with the Chair of Governors' termly communication to parents / carers regarding parking.**
- 3) Whitehouse Primary School ensure they maximise access to the school car park for all staff and official school visitors so they do not need to park in neighbouring roads (albeit legally).**
- 4) Whitehouse Primary School maximise access to the school car park for parents / carers collecting pupils from after-school activities.**
- 5) The Council consider supporting the school's travel plan meetings as a pilot to establish a format to potentially handover to the SBC Junior Road Safety Officer in the school to deliver as part of their duties, and for any good practice identified via this pilot to be circulated to other schools across the Borough.**
- 6) Regarding the Barlborough Avenue side, the Council consider introducing a 20mph speed limit near to the Whitehouse Primary School.**
- 7) Regarding the Barlborough Avenue side, respective Ward Councillors consider using part of their CPB funding allocation towards the installation of bollards to deter pavement / grass verge parking.**

Recommendations (continued)

The Committee recommend that:

- 8) Regarding the Dunelm Road side, the Council work with Whitehouse Primary School to better facilitate access to the school car park for those transporting pupils with SEN, as well as explore the possibility of using the green 'island' within the current ring road zone to create a small number of disabled parking bays.**
- 9) The Council conduct further research with the Department for Transport around the 'School Streets' concept.**
- 10) The actions undertaken following the previous Scrutiny Review of School Parking continue to be reinforced with all schools across the Borough, and the production of a safe parking video using local schools is endorsed.**

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 This report outlines the findings and recommendations following the Crime and Disorder Select Committee's investigation of the Councillor Call for Action regarding Obstructive and Illegal Parking around Whitehouse Primary School.
- 2.2 Councillor Calls for Action (CCfA) were introduced following legislation, specifically the *Police and Justice Act 2006* and the *Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007*, which allows for Councillors to be able to refer matters of local concern to overview and scrutiny committees.
- 2.3 A CCfA provides Councillors with the opportunity to ask for a discussion to take place at scrutiny committees on issues where local problems have arisen, and where all other methods of resolving the issue have been exhausted. The CCfA process is designed to be a last resort and may not provide an immediate solution. However, CCfAs can provide:
- the chance to discuss a pressing issue in an independent, neutral forum, and to bring it to a wider audience;
 - an opportunity to discuss a problem with the sole aim of solving it;
 - a high-profile process owned by the Ward Councillor.
- 2.4 If a Councillor wishes to take forward a CCfA, then a request needs to be completed in writing and should cover the following points:
- Description of topic
 - Why are you raising this topic?
 - Who or what does it affect?
 - What has already been tried in order to resolve the issue?
 - What outcomes do you think should be possible from discussion of a CCfA on this issue?
 - Any other relevant information to support the CCfA request
- 2.5 Using its status as the co-ordinating body for scrutiny at Stockton-on-Tees, the Executive Scrutiny Committee acts as the depository for all CCfAs received (apart from those considered to be excluded by legislation). The Executive Scrutiny Committee will consider the supporting information provided by the Councillor, and decide on the validity of the request. If the CCfA is approved, it is then referred to the relevant Select Committee for inclusion on the next meeting's agenda, where practical. Alternatively, the Executive Scrutiny Committee may consider the CCfA in detail itself, or form a Task and Finish Group. This may be particularly appropriate when Select Committees are especially busy with existing review work.

3.0 Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) Submission

- 3.1 The following Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) was submitted by Cllr Julia Cherrett and Cllr David Minchella in July 2019 regarding Obstructive and Illegal Parking around Whitehouse Primary School.

| COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION | |
|---|--|
| Description of topic: | Obstructive and illegal parking around Whitehouse Primary School. |
| Why are you raising this topic? | <p>On the Barlborough Avenue side of the school most residents are predominantly older people. Most of the properties are bungalows so they sleep at ground floor level. Their sleep is being disturbed daily during term time due to the fact that parents / grandparents start to arrive as early as 7.55am for breakfast club. Honking of horns, playing of car radios, slamming of car doors and raised voices mean no rest for the residents.</p> <p>Driveways are blocked. Residents report being verbally abused when they challenge drivers. Enforcement Officers have also been verbally abused by drivers.</p> <p>At the end of the school day cars start to arrive by around 2.30pm to get a parking space. Again, driveways are blocked, visibility is greatly reduced as cars park on bends and junctions. Again, noise disturbance but there is also the worrying fact that young children are crossing the road between parked cars. These are small children who cannot be seen by drivers who are pulling out, reversing around corners with other cars reducing their visibility. I believe that there is a real health and safety issue here for the children who are using the highway. I also believe that emergency vehicles would not be able to get through. One resident did report that an ambulance could not get to him during a medical emergency.</p> <p>On the Dunelm Road side of the school, residents had their hopes raised when Cllr Grainge obtained ATS funding to address the problem.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the proposed solution consisted simply of bringing in no loading /waiting restrictions which rely on a physical attendance by officers to enforce.</p> |
| Who or what does it affect? | <p>Residents at the school end of Barlborough Avenue, Alford Lane, Kedlestone Close and Chatsworth Court – approx. 85 properties. For all of the properties within this area, Barlborough Avenue is the only means of access and egress to their homes. They cannot take an alternative route.</p> <p>Also, the children themselves who do walk in the area.</p> <p>Residents on Dunelm Road side of the school have their driveways blocked, pavement parking causing access issues and damage that is constantly being repaired by Care For Your Area.</p> |
| What has already been tried in order to resolve the issue? | <p>1: Around 2004/05 yellow lines were introduced around the school. These have been continually ignored over the years.</p> <p>2: Around March 2010 yellow zig zag markings were put outside 2 properties at Barlborough Avenue meaning that no-one (not even residents or blue badge holders) could park there during the restricted times. The impact of such markings was seen to potentially impact on the property values so that the residents concerned had to sign their agreement to this happening. Again, constantly ignored.</p> |

3: In May 2010 the yellow lines were extended from Dunelm Road into Chingford Grove. Constantly ignored.

4: Again in May 2010 the then Chair of Governors agreed that the school gate at the Barlborough Avenue entrance would be locked each day at 3.30pm. This would allow for those children who do walk to be able to leave the school grounds but that parents collecting children from after school activities would use the Dunelm Road entrance. So, disruption to the residents at Barlborough Avenue side would be minimised. This initiative lasted for a very short time and the school became very defensive when asked about it.

5: November 2012 - a resident asked for the waiting time restrictions on Barlborough Avenue to be extended to cover breakfast and after school clubs. This was refused.

6: In February 2014 Enforcement Officers mounted a week-long exercise at the school utilising Police "no parking cones". I was told that the matter would then be raised at Officer's Traffic Group but there is no record of this in the minutes to show that it took place. Enquiry of officers for follow up has been ignored.

Enforcement officers do what they can but are limited in terms of resources. It is a fact that as soon as a driver sees an enforcement vehicle, they move on.

7: In 2015 I referred this issue as a Councillor Call For Action but was told that it would be looked at as part of the overall scrutiny review of school parking.

8: In 2017 Cllr Grainge secured ATS funding to look at the issue from the Dunelm Road side of the school

9: 2018 – ATS recommendations implemented around Dunelm Road. Unfortunately, apart from a couple of bollards at junctions of Duneside / Dingleside, the measures simply consisted of "no waiting / loading" restrictions. These rely on a physical presence to enforce and also a willingness to take a hard line and actually issue penalty notices rather than the "softly softly" approach that has been taken for all of these years.

What outcomes do you think should be possible from discussion of a CCFA on this issue?

There needs to be more positive enforcement action with penalty notices issued.

Possible walk to school routes established. There is alternative parking available at Sainsbury's supermarket and rear of Elm Tree Shops and parents should be encouraged to make use of these. Ultimately a Resident's Parking Zone may need to be considered.

A Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) should also be considered. A PSPO can be used to ban or regulate any activity in public spaces which the local authority believes has a "detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality". Breach of a PSPO is enforceable by police officers, PCSO's, council officers and private security guards employed by the council so are more easily enforceable than the various lines and Traffic Regulation Order. Havering Council have successfully implemented school parking PSPO's and Gateshead Council are in the process of implementation of a pilot project.

What **must not** be allowed to happen is simply a dispersal of the problem to neighbouring roads. There are already problems with cars parking on Elm Tree Avenue. Dingleside, Duneside and Dunelm Road have already had yellow lines put down, such is the scale of the problem.

A further benefit of a PSPO is that the "offence" is that of picking up or dropping off a child within the designated area during the stated times.

This means that residents and their visitors are able to park outside of their own homes at all times (unless of course picking up or dropping off a child). The current rules prevent this.

Any other relevant information to support the CCFA request?

I first submitted this issue as a CCFA request in 2015. At that time, I was told that the issue would be looked at as part of the borough wide scrutiny review of school parking, not as a CCFA. 4 years on, absolutely nothing has changed. Inconsiderate drivers continue to park on pavements, block junctions and put children's lives at risk every school day.

Do we really need to wait for an accident (or worse) before tackling this problem?

Cllr Julia Cherrett

Cllr David Minchella

- 3.2 The CCfA submission highlighted long-standing problems associated with parking in the vicinity of Whitehouse Primary School, and detailed concerns relating to both the Dunelm Road (main entrance) and Barlborough Avenue sides of the school. Whilst the impact of obstructive and illegal parking on the nearby residents was a central theme, the submission also emphasised the dangers to children who are required to navigate their way between parked cars and be mindful of vehicles manoeuvring around cluttered residential areas.
- 3.3 A history of attempts (since 2004-2005) to resolve this issue was included, and the Committee was later provided with a letter dated 13th February 1987 which raised concerns in relation to parking around the school and drew attention to a petition which had been presented on the matter. It was also noted that a CCfA regarding this same subject was submitted in 2015, but was not approved as the stated problems would be investigated as part of a Borough-wide scrutiny review of school parking rather than in isolation.
- 3.4 This CCfA request was considered by the Council's Executive Scrutiny Committee on the 23rd July 2019, where it was resolved that the CCfA be approved and referred to the Crime and Disorder Select Committee for further detailed exploration of the issues raised at its meeting in October 2019.

4.0 Findings

4.1 National guidance on Councillor Calls for Action (CCfA) state that it is key to ascertain desired outcomes, and Cllrs Cherrett and Minchella began the Committee's investigation by highlighting the key features of their CCfA submission and re-iterating their wish for:

- more action to be taken against illegal parking, in particular more positive enforcement action with penalty notices issued (there was a sense that although Enforcement Officers were sometimes outside the school, they were not penalising clear offenders)
- the consideration of measures such as
 - possible walk-to-school routes (see Appendix 1 for walking times)
 - a Resident's Parking Zone
 - a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) which can be used to ban or regulate any activity in public spaces which the Local Authority believes has a 'detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality' (Havering Council have introduced school parking PSPOs and Gateshead Council are in the process of implementing a pilot PSPO project – the approach of Three Rivers Council <https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/school-pspo> was also noted).
- no dispersal of the problem to neighbouring roads, which are already experiencing parking issues.

Views from Residents

4.2 The Committee requested supporting evidence from resident representatives and received the following views from people living either side of Whitehouse Primary School:

Dunelm Road (main entrance)

- Whilst there are more children attending the school from out-of-area, cars often arrive early enough that they could use nearby designated car parks and then walk the short distance to the school.
- Residents have experienced abusive reactions from parents when they are challenged about their parking, and recognise that people know where they live, thereby increasing the potential for reprisals (which have occurred in the past). Residents have become fearful of saying anything.
- Sense that there is a cohort of parents who refuse to adhere to the rules.
- Some visitors to resident properties have been given parking tickets, yet school-related parking irregularities often go unchecked.
- Residents do appreciate time constraints for parents and understand that more children travel to school by car now (due to living outside the area), but unless the rules are enforced more regularly, problems will not reduce.
- Is it possible to have a 'parking eye' which can issue warnings initially rather than an instant fine?

Barlborough Avenue

- Problems mainly stem from there being only one main entry and exit road, and there is often a 30-minute wait at peak times to get off the estate

(something residents have to factor in if making appointments to go anywhere).

- Parents of children from Our Lady and Saint Bede's school also park in the Avenue, exacerbating the problem.
- No 20mph restrictions on this side of the school.
- Roads too narrow for cars to park on both sides unless they use the pavements (which causes kerb damage).
- People may ignore Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), but they would not be able to ignore bollards.
- Introduction of school breakfast club and after-school provision has elongated frustrations around inconsiderate parking. Need a more visible enforcement presence on this side of the school, not just the Dunelm Road side.
- Fewer tickets appear to be given out on this side compared to the Dunelm Road side – tickets are persuasive though, and people are less likely to park in the same place again.
- Would welcome the installation of a camera and some residents would be willing to phone the Security Centre if a PSPO was breached, so the camera could be monitored when needed. Could income from fines be put towards the monitoring of CCTV (if installed)?
- No discernible difference in frequency of issues between the morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up. Problem parking is worse though when it is raining.

4.3 The Committee asked why residents felt incidences of problem parking were increasing. Possible reasons included measures being put in place on the Dunelm Road side which had made those parking inconsiderately switch to the Barlborough Avenue instead, the increase in out-of-area children attending the school, and the establishment of breakfast and after-school clubs.

4.4 In relation to parking tickets being given to those visiting residents near to the school, it was stated that Enforcement Officers do not target specific individuals, and do not know who is who. However, any transgressions on the zig-zag lines are prioritised.

4.5 Local Authority Officers confirmed that parking tickets are not given out retrospectively, and that those issued involve incidents observed by Enforcement Officers (even if they drive off from the scene before the ticket has been given). However, if the Council receives information regarding problem parking, it does endeavour to act on this.

4.6 The Council are keen on an ambassadorial approach and, as such, Enforcement Officers do act with a degree of discretion when it comes to issuing parking tickets – however, there is little leeway when it comes to school parking and risks to child safety. Ultimately, Officers have to abide by regulations (e.g. five-minute observations) which has resulted in 21 Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) being issued within the proximity of the school in 96 enforcement patrols (since the start of 2019).

4.7 The Committee was concerned that, whilst this CCfA had specifically stated that there should be no dispersal of the parking problems to neighbouring roads, the introduction of a PSPO would do exactly that. It was reported that the Sainsbury's (Barlborough Avenue side) Store Manager had previously

indicated his support for the use of its car park for parents to park and walk their child/ren to school, as had the landlord of the Elm Tree pub (Dunelm Road side) which was already covered by CCTV. However, the Committee noted that during the visits to the school prior to this meeting, there were limited empty spaces in the Sainsbury's car park around school drop-off / pick-up time, and the nearby junction was incredibly busy when trying to exit the area (see para 4.37).

- 4.8 It was suggested that a PSPO 'zone' could include the whole area past Sainsbury's (Barlborough Avenue side) and Dunelm Road and the three closes off it (Dunelm Road side) – this would not apply to Blue Badge holders.

Whitehouse Primary School

- 4.9 Whitehouse Primary School provided a comprehensive 'summary of action' document which detailed what it had done regarding parking issues since January 2009. It noted that the school has worked proactively with residents, the Council, parents and children to consider the safety of its pupils and reduce traffic congestion around the school.
- 4.10 The school's Chair of Governors addressed the Committee and introduced this overview which highlighted various issues including complaints from residents, Councillor contact with the school, meetings with Council staff, problem parking reported directly to the school, travel plan meetings attended by residents / parents / pupils / staff / governors / SBC Officers, and an incident of parent conflict which became a Police matter.
- 4.11 Attention was drawn to the use of 'Think before you Park' banners in 2015 which the school were subsequently asked to remove following complaints from residents in another area which had seen problems being dispersed to their road (this was also deemed a planning issue). It was argued that the use of such banners provided only a short-term impact, and that this sort of signage quickly becomes 'wallpaper' and is gradually ignored over time.
- 4.12 The 'summary of action' concluded that the school continues to raise awareness through assemblies, walk-to-school initiatives, letters, newspaper articles, staff monitoring, posters and road safety competitions, curriculum activities, and videos at parent consultations. It was also noted that all school staff have spent time standing in all weathers challenging parents and advising them to park in the dedicated car parks, but that due to the difficulties with a reduction of budget leading to a reduction of staff, the school does not have the capacity to do this any longer. The school also sought the views of parents about parking and the responses (144) were provided to the Committee for information. The school's main concern is the safety of the children and families arriving / leaving school.
- 4.13 The Chair of Governors re-iterated the school's desire to circulate positive messages regarding responsible parking via its pupils, but that issues persist, particularly for vehicles transporting children with special educational needs. School staff had experienced abuse too. The Chair of Governors committed to writing to all parents after the meeting, and each term, in relation to ongoing parking concerns (a copy of which would be provided to the Committee), and would continue to raise this with the Head Teacher during

their regular meetings each half-term. This offer was welcomed by the Committee.

- 4.14 The Committee asked if parents are able to use the school car park for breakfast and / or after-school club. Whilst a barrier is used to prevent unauthorised access to the school car park, the Chair of Governors stated he would ask the school about this, even though it would not solve all parking-related problems. It was also noted that staff are present at the school until 5.00pm, therefore spaces are limited. Following the Committee meeting in October 2019, the Chair of Governors reported that access to the school car park for breakfast club was provided previously on a trial basis, but this prevented staff accessing the car park to ensure they were ready to start the school day – as such, the school are unable to offer this moving forward.
- 4.15 Residents expressed concern that some staff members were parking in the closes around the school (outside of the TRO area) rather than in the school car park, and asked if this could be raised with senior staff. Following the Committee meeting, the Chair of Governors confirmed that this had been raised with the school, but also noted that they cannot take further action if staff are parking on an unrestricted public highway.
- 4.16 The Committee sought clarity around the school's SEN provision and the transport needs of pupils with SEN. The Chair of Governors stated that there was around 35 children with complex needs at the school – a number of pupils with SEN are transported via bus and taxi which are able to access the school car park.
- 4.17 With reference to the frequent school travel plan meetings listed in the 'summary of action' document, the Committee felt that whilst the involvement of parents was positive, those who actually park irresponsibly are unlikely to engage in such meetings. Residents acknowledged that these meetings were useful up to a point, though they were not always sufficiently advertised.
- 4.18 The effectiveness of the school's 'parking pledge' was queried – the Chair of Governors felt that although the school has and continues to promote good behaviour in relation to parking, those who do not want to sign up to such concepts will not. However, the school continues to encourage responsible parking in addition to all the other things a school is required to do.

Local Authority

- 4.19 Addressing some of the points made in the original CCfA submission, Local Authority Officers stated that injury collision records indicate that there have been no injury accidents in and around the surrounding highway network of Whitehouse Primary School in the last three years (the period of time the Council would look to intervene if necessary). In addition, Environmental Health have confirmed that they have not received any complaints regarding honking horns, playing of car radios, etc., in the vicinity of Whitehouse Primary School. Noise issues are difficult to prove and enforce against, and of the items noted in the CCfA, only loud radios potentially could be investigated and would only be enforceable from a source point and over an extended period.

- 4.20 A recommendation from the Scrutiny Review of School Parking (2016) was that site-specific improvements or changes to assist with enforcement or education of drivers to reduce the impact of school parking should be considered. A scheme involving Whitehouse Primary School was developed following an Area Transport Strategy (ATS) request, which has since been implemented (see Appendix 2).
- 4.21 A Living Streets report (*Swap the School Run for a School Walk, 2018*) was highlighted which included several recommendations where Local Authorities can directly influence the school journey. Actions taken by SBC in relation to these recommendations was provided as follows:

| Recommendation | SBC Action |
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| <p>7 – Local Authorities should adopt a ‘children first’ approach to planning and street design, prioritising safe and enjoyable streets for children in all existing and new developments.</p> | <p>The School Parking Scrutiny Review included a recommendation that maximum consideration to future school planning submissions is given by Planning Committee to ensure travel arrangements alleviate wherever possible parking outside schools. Many schools have ‘school zones’ and advisory 20mph limits introduced on surrounding highway.</p> |
| <p>8 – Local Authorities should make 20mph the default speed limit for all streets where people live, work, shop and play and consider other road safety enhancements to provide the maximum safety benefit for children.</p> | <p>Since the early 1990s, the Council has introduced traffic calming and highway design in residential areas that is 20mph by design - this includes around many schools built since that time. The School Parking Scrutiny Review included a recommendation where, if requested by individual schools, SBC will consider site-specific improvements or changes to assist with enforcement or education of drivers to reduce the impact of school parking. This may involve additional engineering measures or a review of restrictions as examples. 20mph limits are in place around Whitehouse.</p> |
| <p>9 – Local Authorities should use their powers to create Controlled Parking Zones around schools, to prohibit parking on streets near schools.</p> | <p>Most schools have zig zag lines and waiting and loading restrictions in place that are clearly marked that give information to drivers. Whitehouse Primary School has parking restrictions in place to prevent illegal parking around the school.</p> |
| <p>10 – Local Authorities should support calls for street closures through pilot projects and roll out schemes on a permanent basis where these are proved to be effective.</p> | <p>Closing streets could be effective, but is very resource-intensive to prevent vehicle movements. This would also be restrictive for any residents as physical closures would be in place. Officers are aware of pilot projects that have cost in the region of £30k and then rely on the Local Authority to implement the closures - the ongoing revenue cost is unlikely to be sustainable. A potential consequence of street closures is displaced parking in surrounding residential areas.</p> |
| <p>11 – Local Authorities should work with schools to deliver evidence based and effective behaviour change initiatives and accreditation schemes, as well as co-</p> | <p>The Council had a dedicated School Travel Plan Officer, however this post was deleted as part of a service review in 2014. A number of schools worked with the Council to develop travel plans, however with the change in pupils each year they quickly become out-of-date. Active travel and road safety is</p> |

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|--|---|
| <p>ordinate strategic planning for active school travel.</p> | <p>encouraged in schools through the Junior Road Safety Officer project. The Council works with a number of schools following the School Parking Scrutiny Review recommendations. Dedicated travel planning for every school, every year unfortunately cannot be sustained with current resource levels. Whitehouse Primary School do have a travel plan group, and Enforcement Officers as well as Highway Officers attend these meetings.</p> |
| <p>12 – Local Authorities should collect and monitor robust data on rates of walking to school in their area.</p> | <p>This is not currently carried out as higher priorities exist. Collecting data and evidence is important, but the interventions that are put in place are a higher priority.</p> |

Other recommendations in the Living Streets report are around Central Government as well as the individual schools themselves. A recommendation of the Scrutiny Review of School Parking was to write to Central Government – the response is included at Appendix 3.

- 4.22 Information obtained from the School Admissions service shows that Whitehouse Primary School has a capacity of 385 pupils, and had 383 pupils on roll as at January 2019. Of these, 64 were from the Whitehouse Primary designated admission zone, with 303 from other North / Central Stockton areas, and the remaining numbers from Billingham, Thornaby, Ingleby Barwick and Eaglescliffe.

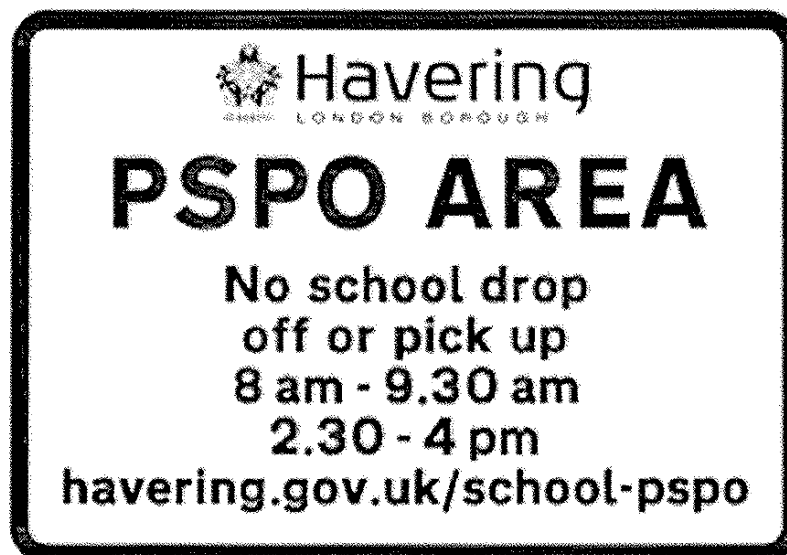
The Council's Planning and Performance (Education Information) team provided additional data on the number of pupils attending Whitehouse Primary School from within the designated admission zone over recent years:

- Spring 2016: 376 pupils Reception to Year Six, of which 76 were from the Whitehouse Primary designated admission zone
- Spring 2017: 386 pupils Reception to Year Six, of which 69 were from the Whitehouse Primary designated admission zone
- Spring 2018: 390 pupils Reception to Year Six, of which 71 were from the Whitehouse Primary designated admission zone
- Spring 2019: 383 pupils Reception to Year Six, of which 64 were from the Whitehouse Primary designated admission zone

- 4.23 Referencing the increase in out-of-area children attending the school, the Committee sought views on why this had occurred. The Chair of Governors stated that Whitehouse Primary was considered a good strong school, and that decisions to send their child/ren to the school was very much a parental choice. It was also pointed out that there is a high proportion of older residents (living in bungalows) in the vicinity of the school who have no children of school-age, therefore without the demand from further afield, there would be no school. Resident representatives acknowledged that the area around the school is a mature estate and that they have been reluctant to move.

Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO)

- 4.24 A PSPO can be implemented using The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to tackle anti-social behaviour such as dog fouling or alcohol consumption in public places. Some Local Authorities have used this legislation to implement an Order to prevent 'dropping-off and picking-up children' in an area designated under a PSPO, and as noted in the CCfA submission, Gateshead Council is currently introducing a pilot scheme at one school in the near future (they have been through the legislative process and the scheme is just about to come into force).
- 4.25 PSPOs introduce a new set of criminal offences that people can be prosecuted against – they are for a maximum of an initial three years (can be extended for a further three years, though then have to be reviewed on an annual basis), and have to be removed if the problem they were introduced for ceases.
- 4.26 If a PSPO is introduced to prevent dropping-off and picking-up of children, it can be enforced on site or by using cameras. It was noted that any camera enforcement does require a resource to process the surveillance, as well as issue the fixed penalty notice. Siting of a camera or cameras would require careful consideration as it is unlikely that an entire area could be covered fully by cameras. Any placement of cameras must give full consideration to key pieces of legislation to protect human rights.
- 4.27 Since a PSPO can make breaches a criminal offence, the Council would need to take adequate steps to identify drivers ('burden of proof') – a significant camera network around the school would likely be required. It was also noted that, under current procedures, cameras could not be used to issue tickets – this would require a PSPO to be introduced. However, installation of cameras may provide a deterrent.
- 4.28 A PSPO would be signed (see below for an example) and is likely to cover a range of prohibitions. Any implementation would require extensive communication to ensure motorists are aware of the restrictions and that they applied to them – this is because no yellow lining would be in place that motorists would understand.



- 4.29 Currently, zig zag markings (see Appendix 4) and significant waiting restrictions (see para 4.36) exist around Whitehouse Primary School that are often abused or lead to parking displacement in surrounding areas. This controlled parking area (at the Dunelm Road side (main entrance) for the biggest impact) gets significant enforcement resource, yet parking infringements persist.
- 4.30 In summary, Local Authority Officers felt that introducing alternative controls such as a PSPO could lead to confusion for motorists as it is not highway law or included in the Highway Code. A PSPO still requires significant enforcement and could criminalise those who offend. Alternative measures to encourage walking and cycling to school are supported through the school travel plan meetings, but supporting all schools in such a way cannot be sustained with current resource levels.
- 4.31 The Committee was informed that Havering Council (quoted in the original CCfA submission) had been approached for comments on their PSPO implementation and its effectiveness. In response, Havering stated that whilst the introduction of PSPOs had been effective at two out of the four schools, they were considering withdrawing all four of the orders for several reasons including that PSPOs are not backed by the Department for Transport (DfT), they do not exempt disabled drivers, and the low number of penalty charges subsequently issued has not helped cover the significant implementation costs incurred by the Council as originally anticipated. The Council was instead looking at moving towards the 'School Street' approach.
- 4.32 A critical factor highlighted to the Committee was the fact that there are only five Enforcement Officers available at any one time (out of a core provision of 20 staff) for over 60 schools – this had to be borne in mind if a PSPO was being considered, particularly as other schools across the Borough may make subsequent requests for a similar approach to tackling parking issues, thereby creating a funding pressure. It was re-iterated that Gateshead Council's pilot only covers one school, and Havering Council's PSPO coverage relates to four schools.
- 4.33 The Committee asked if Officers were seeing similar issues around other schools across the Borough – this was confirmed, with frequent issues being raised regarding attitudes to parking. One particular area's use of dedicated Officers paid for by the respective Town Council to address similar parking concerns was noted, yet problems still exist.
- 4.34 The role of Councillors' Community Participation Budget (CPB) in tackling parking-related issues was discussed – this was a possibility (as well as ATS funding) if Councillors identified potential benefits. However, any scheme would need to be scoped out thoroughly, and it was unlikely that the CPB allocation for the Ward Councillor's would be enough to cover the required costs of an intervention.
- 4.35 Referencing the 'three Es' (education, engineering, enforcement), the Committee suggested that there was clear evidence the school had repeatedly tried to 'educate' parents and children about responsible parking (even though some choose to ignore this), and there had been numerous 'engineering' features implemented around the school to deter problem parking. However, 'enforcement' resources were limited, therefore

introducing more 'engineering' (e.g. PSPO) would not solve the pressures around enforcement.

Committee Visits to School (including views from parents)

4.36 To gain an understanding of the geographical nature of the school, Committee Members undertook two visits (on separate days and observing each side of the school) prior to the CCfA meeting on the 24th October 2019. Observations were recorded as follows:

23rd October 2019 – 2.30pm (Barlborough Avenue side)

- Enforcement Officer was present, potentially skewing a normal school pick-up scenario – advised that anyone parking on the zig zag lines near the school gates (not observed during the visit) would get an automatic ticket.
- Poor parking on pavements / grass verges / corners of junctions, and bottleneaking of roads with cars parked on both sides opposite each other.
- Blue badge holders parked on single yellow lines.
- Approached by some parents who were keen to know what the problem was regarding parking – feeling that parking issues only occur for small periods of time at the start and end of the school day, and that if people are not parking illegally, they are not doing anything wrong. Parents often in a rush, and what do residents expect living so close to a school.

24th October 2019 – 8.30am (Dunelm Road side)

- Lots of signage around Dunelm Road (see right graphic for example) and the surrounding closes – are parents aware of what they mean?
- Parking on single yellow lines (partly on the pavement) on a bend, impairing vision of oncoming vehicles.
- Blue badge holders parking on single yellow lines.
- Some children dropped off via the ring road, with at least one parent leaving their vehicle unoccupied for several minutes. 16 cars dropped their child/ren off by stopping on the zig zag lines.
- No obvious staff member outside gates – could their presence enable more children to be dropped off instead of parents having to park around the neighbourhood for a period of time?
- Again approached by some parents, one of which was a parent of a disabled child who has to park away from the zig zag area and walk, yet others do as they please. Parents very supportive of stronger enforcement. Blue badge holders claimed they are unable to use the school car park as it is 'always full' – one suggestion to replace the island within the ring road with a number of disabled parking bays.



- Verbal exchange witnessed between a parent and another driver who stopped on the zig zag lines on the ring road to pick-up an elderly person – driver told the parent ‘what’s your problem’ and ‘keep your nose out’.
- 4.37 During these visits, Members were approached by a number of parents with conflicting opinions about the extent of the parking problems – some were very supportive of stronger enforcement, and others could not see what the problem was, noting that parents were often in a rush and that residents should accept such congestion during specific times in the day as they live close to a school. Members also observed limited empty spaces in the Sainsbury’s car park (Barlborough Avenue side) around school drop-off / pick-up time, and found the nearby junction incredibly busy when trying to exit the area.

Other Local Authority Approaches

- 4.38 In addition to Havering Council implementing a PSPO for four of its educational establishments and Gateshead Council undertaking a PSPO pilot with one of its schools, the Committee’s attention was also drawn to other Local Authorities’ attempts to address school parking concerns.

Ealing Council

Organise a Perfect Parking Campaign:

- Reduce car use by encouraging walking, scooting and cycling or promoting Park and Stride
- Ask parents to make the Parking Promise
- Design posters to temporarily display inside and outside your school
- Learn a song about safe parking
- Take part in a Car Free Day or Park Away Day
- Ask your students to be Pupil Traffic Wardens
- Consult with local residents about setting up an after school Play Street
- Learn and perform a play about reducing parking issues, active travel and air quality
- AS A LAST RESORT – Enforcement by London Borough of Ealing parking services

Lancashire County Council

- Create Walkzone Maps
- Leaflets and Newsletter Snippets
- Checklist for all the possible immediate solutions to parking issues outside schools
- Quiz and wordsearch are great way to test your knowledge of parking issues outside schools
- ‘Stuck in a Jam’ project – can be used in school assemblies with children and their parents focusing on parking in a safe and sensible manner.

- 4.39 As part of a progress update on the outstanding recommendation from the previously completed Scrutiny Review of School Parking (2016), the Committee were shown a video from Cambridgeshire County Council of children singing about safe parking outside schools. The Committee felt this gave a powerful message to parents, and a Stockton-on-Tees version should be considered as a future additional resource.

5.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

5.1 In considering the desired outcomes that were outlined as part of this CCfA, the Committee reflected on the fact that school parking issues were prevalent around most schools across the Borough, often exacerbated by the general proliferation of cars over the years. Pertinent to the problems associated with Whitehouse Primary School was the increase in pupils from beyond the designated admission zone and the geographical nuances of the school, factors which are extremely difficult to influence. Whilst greater enforcement of illegal parking would be welcomed (at all schools), restrictions around current enforcement resources hinders the Council's ability to penalise such activity as much as many would like. It would also be unfair to single out one school above others for increased enforcement patrols.

5.2 After careful consideration of the evidence provided, the Committee concluded that the introduction of a PSPO in the vicinity of Whitehouse Primary School would not be appropriate due to a number of factors including:

- it is not a 'forever' measure (has to be removed if problems cease, which could lead to issues reoccurring)
- it would simply disperse the problem to nearby roads,
- it may lead to other schools / Councillors in the Borough making requests for a similar deterrent (thereby creating a cost pressure)
- it could 'criminalise' parents for doing the 'school run'

An overriding issue was that the current extensive restrictions around the school were not able to be enforced enough, so adding further 'engineering' would not solve this, yet would require significant installation costs.

5.3 The Committee's view on the introduction of a PSPO was also influenced by the experiences of Havering Council who have indicated their desire to remove their existing PSPOs on the basis that they are not backed by the Department for Transport (DfT), they do not exempt disabled drivers, and the low number of penalty charges subsequently issued has not helped cover the significant implementation costs incurred by the Council as originally anticipated. Instead, the Committee agreed a number of alternative measures which both supplemented previous work on this issue, and provided further means of promoting more responsible parking around the school itself.

Recommendations

The Committee recommend that:

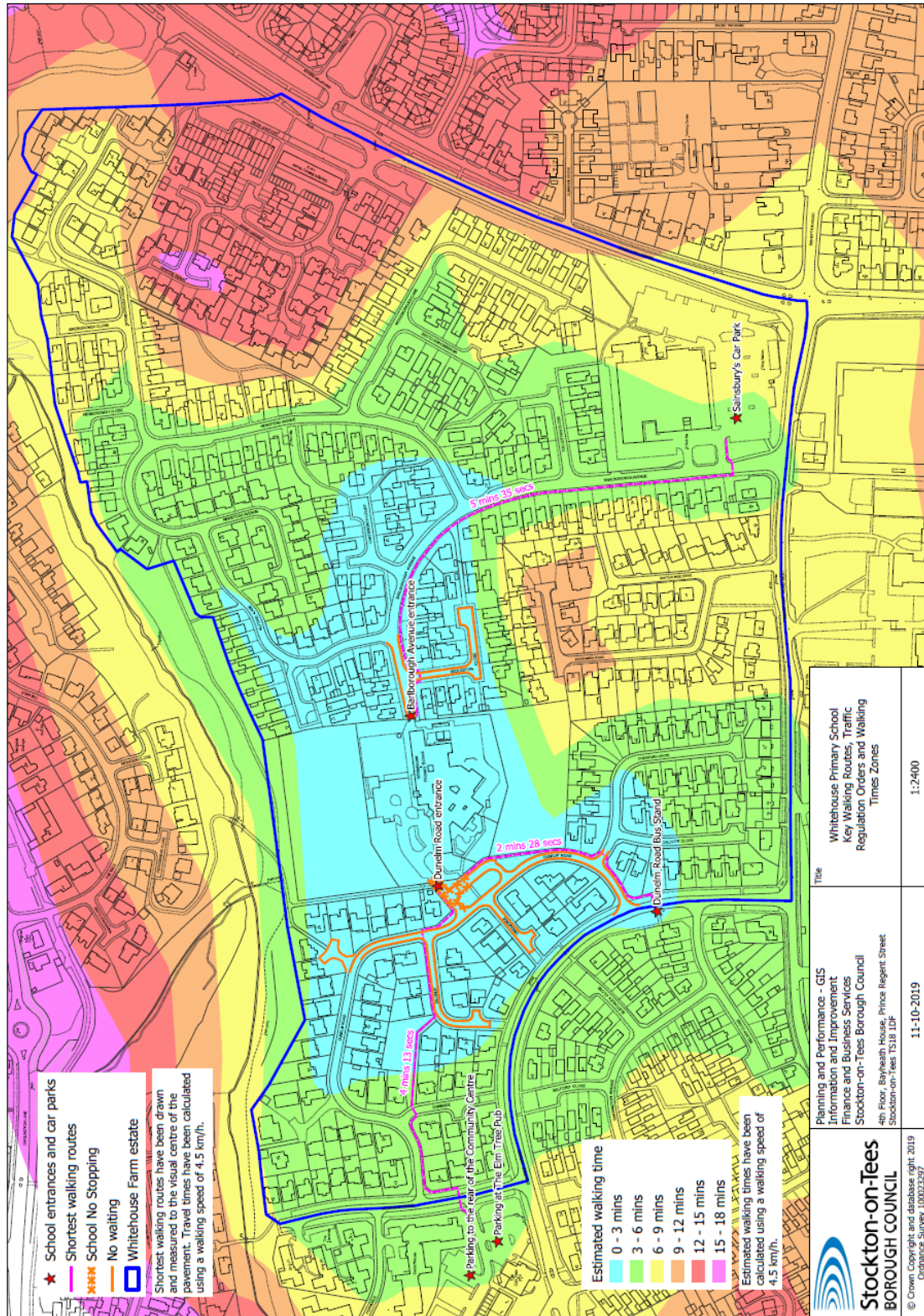
- 1) The commitment of Whitehouse Primary School's Chair of Governors to send termly correspondence to parents / carers regarding parking issues / updates is endorsed.**
- 2) Whitehouse Primary School distribute a 'walkzone' map (e.g. Appendix 1) with the Chair of Governors' termly communication to parents / carers regarding parking.**

Recommendations (continued)

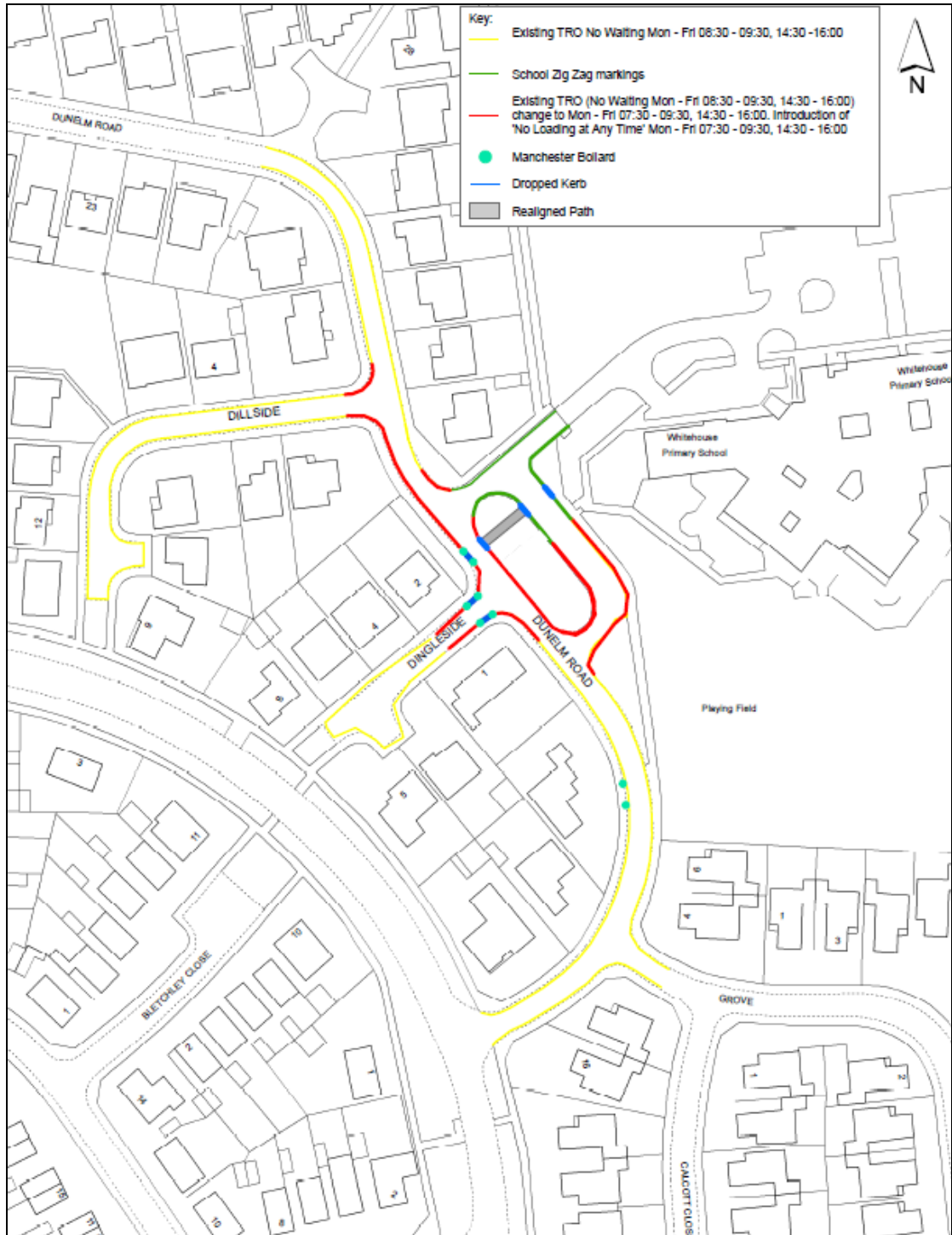
The Committee recommend that:

- 3) Whitehouse Primary School ensure they maximise access to the school car park for all staff and official school visitors so they do not need to park in neighbouring roads (albeit legally).**
- 4) Whitehouse Primary School maximise access to the school car park for parents / carers collecting pupils from after-school activities.**
- 5) The Council consider supporting the school's travel plan meetings as a pilot to establish a format to potentially handover to the SBC Junior Road Safety Officer in the school to deliver as part of their duties, and for any good practice identified via this pilot to be circulated to other schools across the Borough.**
- 6) Regarding the Barlborough Avenue side, the Council consider introducing a 20mph speed limit near to the Whitehouse Primary School.**
- 7) Regarding the Barlborough Avenue side, respective Ward Councillors consider using part of their CPB funding allocation towards the installation of bollards to deter pavement / grass verge parking.**
- 8) Regarding the Dunelm Road side, the Council work with Whitehouse Primary School to better facilitate access to the school car park for those transporting pupils with SEN, as well as explore the possibility of using the green 'island' within the current ring road zone to create a small number of disabled parking bays.**
- 9) The Council conduct further research with the Department for Transport around the 'School Streets' concept.**
- 10) The actions undertaken following the previous Scrutiny Review of School Parking continue to be reinforced with all schools across the Borough, and the production of a safe parking video using local schools is endorsed.**


APPENDIX 1: Walking Times to Whitehouse Primary School



APPENDIX 2: Area Transport Strategy (ATS) Scheme for Whitehouse Primary School



APPENDIX 3: Response from Government to Scrutiny Review of School Parking


**Department
for Transport**

Councillor Bob Cook
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Our Ref: MC/219705
Your Ref: BC/JL/269

9 MAR 2018

Dear Cllr Cook

Thank you for your letter of 6 February 2018, about the issue of parking enforcement near schools. I note the concerns you have raised and that you have undertaken a local scrutiny review of school parking in your area.

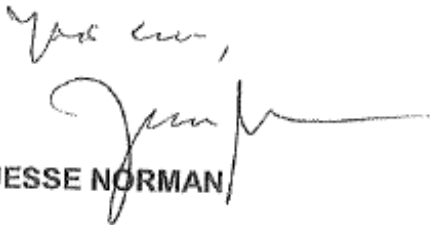
It is a matter for local authorities to provide appropriate traffic management schemes for their roads, as they have a statutory responsibility under section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. Local authorities are therefore free to make their own decisions about the streets under their care, provided they take account of the relevant legislation.

Among the options available are the placement of "School Keep Clear" markings. These are legally enforceable when used in conjunction with an upright road sign (as prescribed in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016, as amended), and backed by a Traffic Regulation Order.

Powers under Section 1 and 2 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 can also be used to make Traffic Regulation Orders, to prohibit parking on a designated length of highway or over a wider area. In cases where a local authority has obtained Civil Parking Enforcement powers under the Traffic Management Act 2004, which I understand your council has, it is able to enforce such parking prohibitions rather than relying on the Police.

The Department is not proposing to give local authorities any additional statutory powers, in relation to parking near schools, at this time.

Yours sincerely,


JESSE NORMAN

APPENDIX 4: Zig zag markings around Whitehouse Primary School

