

COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

Description of topic:

Obstructive and illegal parking around Whitehouse Primary School.

Why are you raising this topic?

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.

Driveways are blocked. Residents report being verbally abused when they challenge drivers. Enforcement Officers have also been verbally abused by drivers.

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.

On the Dunelm Road side of the school, residents had their hopes raised when Cllr Grainge obtained ATS funding to address the problem.

Unfortunately, the proposed solution consisted simply of bringing in no loading /waiting restrictions which rely on a physical attendance by officers to enforce.

Who or what does it affect?

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.

Also, the children themselves who do walk in the area.

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.

What has already been tried in order to resolve the issue?

1: Around 2004/05 yellow lines were introduced around the school. These have been continually ignored over the years.

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.

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