

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Highways Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 6 February 2014 at 9.30 am.**

Present:

Councillor G Bleasdale in the Chair

Members of the Committee:

Councillors C Kay (Vice-Chairman), J Allen, B Armstrong, D Bell, H Bennett, I Geldard, O Gunn, D Hall, D Hicks, K Hopper, S Morrison, J Robinson, R Todd, J Turnbull and R Young.

Also Present:

Councillor N Martin.

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors O Milburn, R Ormerod, J Rowlandson, P Stradling and M Wilkes.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute members.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 7, 15 October and 6 November were, agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman with the exception of Councillor O Gunn being added to the attendance for the meeting held on 7 October 2013.

4 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any items of business on the agenda.

5 Durham City: Parking and Waiting Restrictions (South West) Order 2013

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development regarding an objection received during the formal consultation to a proposed traffic regulation order covering the South West of Durham City. The objection had been received as part of a monitoring exercise to ensure that the County Council maintained an efficient and effective Civil Parking Enforcement regime. (for copy see file of Minutes).

A formal consultation exercise had been carried out advertising the existing orders, the vast majority of which had remained unchanged. Amendments had been proposed for the following areas:

- Milburngate – change to disabled parking;
- A177 lay-by (south of Howlands park and ride) – waiting restrictions;
- Laburnum Avenue – introduction of no waiting at any time;
- Redhills Lane – introduction of no waiting Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

All of the amendments had been unopposed, with the exception of the introduction of the no waiting restrictions at Redhills Lane. The Strategic Traffic Manager informed the Committee that the amendments to Redhills Lane had been proposed following requests from local residents and explained that officers had worked closely with residents in trying to devise a scheme that would benefit all residents and it was unfortunate that one objection remained.

The Committee received a presentation which illustrated the extent of the proposed restrictions. These were in close proximity to Durham Johnston School and were subject to a high level of parking. This led to road safety concerns, particularly on a section of carriageway where vehicles were being parked on either side of a sharp bend in the road. The Committee noted the location of the objector and the effect of the various amendments to the order, along with two images. One image showed over 20 vehicles parked on one side of the road, without any passing places thereby reducing the road to one-way. The other image showed vehicles parked opposite driveways and dropped kerbs which blocked access and exit to residents (for presentation see file of Minutes).

The Strategic Traffic Manager informed the Committee that the proposed restrictions during the initial consultation exercise were equidistant either side of the bend, however, this had led to objections from other local residents as they felt that restrictions at that length would not resolve the problems being encountered. Other residents of Redhills Lane were not supportive of a reduction in length to the proposed restrictions. There had been no requests from residents to implement permit parking in the area and any requests would be considered against specific criteria.

The objector felt that the restrictions should be equidistant either side of the bend and reduced in length by approximately two thirds at the south eastern end. The objector also wished to see the introduction of residents parking permits if the scheme were to go ahead.

The Committee had also been provided with a further letter of representation from the objector which had been circulated to the Committee at the request of the objector, in his absence. The letter to the Committee contained points suggesting that the proposal:

- had been devised on incorrect assumptions;
- favoured a number of residents whilst not granting other residents the same privileges and if there were to be any long-term permanent issues it would pass any problems onto other parts of Redhills Lane and neighbouring streets;
- was not equidistant;
- would incur unnecessary costs associated with creating and maintain the parking restrictions; and

- was an attempt to introduce reactive legislation against an old problem that was currently negligible and would shortly not exist at all.

Councillor N Martin, local County Councillor for the Neville's Cross Electoral Division indicated his support for the proposed scheme and explained to the Committee that parking problems in the area started to surface approximately a year ago. The main issue related to vehicles being parked on the bend. It was felt that the initial proposals had been too constrained. Since that time the proposal had been worked through, culminating in the final proposal presented before the Committee and supported by the majority of local residents.

Councillor O Gunn also expressed her support for the scheme having visited the area and fully considered the report, together with the detail of the extensive consultation.

In response to a question from Councillor D Hall regarding enforcement of the restrictions, if implemented, the Strategic Traffic Manager confirmed that civil parking enforcement was a matter for the County Council, carried out by its own traffic wardens. The area could be targeted for enforcement if motorists ignored the restrictions, however, in most cases, the majority of motorists tended to adhere to parking restrictions.

Councillor J Turnbull commented that he was in favour of the scheme given the road safety concerns and the nature of parking in the area. However, he expressed concern that similar problems may arise in neighbouring streets, particularly, St. Aidan's Crescent, once cars were displaced from Redhills Lane. In response, the Strategic Traffic Manager informed the Committee that motorists would be displaced with the effect of the traffic order and the County Council would have to address such issues if they arose.

Resolved

That the recommendations contained in the report be agreed.

6 Voluntary Registration of Land as Village Green at Eldon

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services regarding an application to register an area of land known as Eldon Village Green as a village green under the provisions of Section 15 of the Commons Act 2006 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Planning and Development Solicitor informed the Committee that the application for registration had been made by 'Eldon Parish Council' as they felt that the area of land was useful to have as village green because of current usage. The application to voluntarily register the land was made to Durham County Council in its capacity as the Commons Registration Authority by the Asset Management section in its capacity as the owner of the land.

The Committee were informed that the plan circulated with the papers contained an error. The area identified for registration on the plan was larger than the area which the Parish Council had requested to be registered. The Committee were advised that the additional areas identified for registration were paths. Once registered, maintenance of these paths could be problematic because the surface could not be upgraded. In the circumstances

the registering of these areas would be inappropriate. A revised plan had been circulated to the Committee which clarified the correct area for registration.

The Planning and Development Solicitor informed the Committee that the law did not allow the Council to refuse the application, provided that the landowner had submitted a statutory declaration in support of the application to the effect that the land was within the ownership of Durham County Council and that all necessary consents, of which there were none, had been received.

Councillor Hall queried the reason for registration and sought clarification if registering the land as village green would result in any possible restrictions to the neighbouring Community Centre.

The Clerk to Eldon Parish Council, confirmed that the area of land had been used for exercise and recreation events previously. Many parish Councillors were double-hatted and were representatives on the Eldon Partnership which was responsible for the running of the community centre.

Resolved

That the land referred to in the report and shown edged blue on the revised plan be registered as a village green.