

Report to Houghton Parish Council
by the Houghton Parish Council Working Party on
Car Parking and Traffic Management Issues in Houghton

INTRODUCTION

1. The Working Party, which was commissioned by the Parish Council at its meeting on 9th August 2012 to address relevant issues and report back to the Parish Council with recommendations, comprises the following members of the village: Yasir Ali, Stuart Almond, Huw Francis, Steve and Sally Ham, Ian Hill, Dave Kirkwood, Jan Knox, Scott Sims, Bill Scott, Jim Sharman and Ann Sleath. Over the last three months it has:

- met four times on 12th September, 9th October, 5th November and 6th November 2012
- met and discussed its findings with Greg Payne (Leicestershire County Council) who has advised us on the feasibility of our various suggestions

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Traffic generally flows well through Houghton but at certain times and in certain places – near the Co-op, the Village Hall/St Catharine’s Church and the Newsagents/Studio Image – inconsiderate parking by a minority of drivers causes traffic flow problems in the village (paragraphs 4 and 5 refer). The Working Party has identified a number of measures to alleviate generic and specific parking and traffic management issues in Houghton (paragraphs 6 - 15 refer). The report lists other potential measures rejected by the Working Party as impractical or too expensive to implement (paragraph 16 refers). The report concludes by outlining a way forward that the Parish Council may wish to adopt (paragraphs 17 and 18 refer).

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

3. The Working Party recommends that the Parish Council:
- consider the recommendations contained in this report
 - publishes the report on the PC website
 - consults widely with villagers by:
 - holding a public meeting to discuss the various issues raised in this report
 - issuing a village wide questionnaire (similar to the recent Broadband Survey) to collect data and obtain villagers views on their perceptions of parking problems and their thoughts on the various possible solutions to these problems

MAIN BODY

Generic Parking and Traffic Management Issues in Houghton

4. The Working Party recognises that traffic generally flows well through Houghton. At times and in specific locations in the village, however, there is a greater demand for parking spaces than is available and this leads some motorists to parking in an inconsiderate manner which in turn adversely affects traffic flow through the village. This manifests itself in some motorists:

- parking on both sides of a road so as to restrict and, in the case of large vehicles such as buses or farm vehicles, to stop traffic flow
- parking on pavements which obstructs pedestrian, wheelchair and child buggy passage and may force pedestrians into the road
- parking in front of or near to people's driveways.

Specific Parking and Traffic Management Issues in Houghton

5. The Working Party identified three specific locations where inconsiderate parking by drivers causes traffic flow problems in Houghton. These are:
- on Main Street around the Co-op (Monday to Sunday, 0800 – 1800, but often worst first thing in the morning and towards the end of the afternoon)
 - at the junction of Main Street and St Catharine's Way (sometimes up to 100m in any direction from the junction):
 - Monday to Friday during term time (c.0830 – 0915 and 1500 – 1545)
 - Any time when there is a major event at either the Village Hall or St Catharine's Church
 - on St Catharine's Way outside the Newsagents and Studio Image (Monday to Saturday, 0800 – 1800)

Possible Measures to Alleviate Generic Parking and Traffic Management Issues in Houghton

6. The Working Party recognizes that the key to improving the parking problems in Houghton is down to changing drivers' behaviour and persuading them to park and drive responsibly in and through the village. This is easier said than done. By adopting the following measures, however, it may be possible to alleviate the worst effects of inconsiderate parking.
7. The root cause of many of the problems is a lack of easily accessible parking spaces at key points in the village. The Working Party **recommends** that the Parish Council should explore the possibility of obtaining additional car parking spaces in Houghton. Specifically it should:
- obtain pre application advice from LCC on building a car park in the field opposite Houghton Cricket Club (HCC)
 - explore with the land owner of the field opposite the cricket ground whether they would consider leasing or selling the corner of the field to the PC for car parking
 - explore with HCC if they would consider developing their existing car parking area and opening it up for use by
 - parents dropping off and picking up their children from school
 - individuals attending large events in the village (such as the annual Craft Fair and the LOROS Walk)
 - explore with the owner of the farm land behind the church whether this could be used for car parking (**Comment:** the entrance to this land is opposite the Village Hall)
 - explore with the Village Hall Committee opening up some of their land near the back of the Hall as a temporary car park. (**Comment:** during the course of the Working Party's

deliberations a rumour swept the village that it had decided to turn the Village Hall field into a car park and that an access road to it was going to be built. I explained to a dozen or so villagers who attended the WP meeting on 9th October 2012 that no such decision had been taken and indeed that it was not within the remit of the WP to make any such decision. I similarly wrote an article to this effect in the Houghton News. I made the point that it was simply an option which the Parish Council could decide upon at a later date. The Village Hall Committee is in the process of undertaking a thorough review of the use of the Village Hall. This should be complete by Spring 2013)

8. The Working Party further **recommends** that the Parish Council should explore the possibility of obtaining leaflets which could be placed under windscreen wipers of vehicles parked inconsiderately advising them to park more considerately. **Comment:** Charnwood Borough Council, RNIB and Leicestershire Police have produced such a leaflet (copy attached). Councillor Simon Galton has informed the Working Party that Harborough District Council (HDC) had agreed to follow Charnwood's lead and is supporting this initiative. He agreed that it might be possible to adapt the generic leaflet for Harborough to include a photograph of a pedestrian trying unsuccessfully to get past an inconsiderately parked vehicle in Houghton.

Possible Measures to Alleviate Specific Parking and Traffic Management Issues in Houghton

Parking on Main Street around the Co-op

9. This is the area in the village which is most consistently troubled with inconsiderate parking leading to traffic congestion. The vast majority of motorists who park there do so only for a few minutes when they go into the shops. A few who attend Annabella's may park there longer. The Working Party **recommends** that the Parish Council should:
 - in the summer of 2013 when traffic regulations are due to change, explore with Leicestershire County Council the possibility of painting Junction Protection Markings (JPM) on the corner between the War Memorial and the Co-op and the junction of Main Street and Weir Lane. **Comment:** the Working Party recognized that implementing such solutions may have a knock on effect in forcing cars to park elsewhere in the village. However, from a safety perspective, the majority felt that this was an option well worth exploring
 - consider buying in traffic parking officers for a few hours a month to police illegal parking if JPMs are introduced. **Comment:** the Working Party believes that this would have a major deterrent effect on motorists parking illegally/inconsiderately if they thought they might get a parking fine. They could also operate near the school if JPMs were installed there as well – see paragraph 12 below
 - speak to the various shop keepers in Main Street and explore with them whether they could park elsewhere during the day – for example in the Field Car Park or by making arrangements with local residents to park on their driveways. By parking outside their premises they effectively block a temporary parking space all day
 - contact the bus companies to see if they could slightly alter their timetables to ensure that their buses do not cross down Main Street

- obtain quotes for the cost of purchasing and installing additional bollards outside the Pharmacy and possibly elsewhere in the area around the Co-op
- write to the Co-op to see if they can change the times their delivery lorries unload – so they don't clash with buses
- explore further with the Co-op whether they can use the land at the back of the store for parking

Parking at and around the junction of Main Street and St Catharine's Way - Monday to Friday during term time

10. In the main, the difficulties caused by inconsiderate parking in this area are caused by parents dropping off and picking up their children at the start and end of the school day. The Working Party recognises that whilst the disruption only potentially occurs for about an hour and half each day, it can cause real disruption and inconvenience. Indeed on more than one occasion in 2012 inconsiderately parked vehicles in this area have meant that the 747 Bus has been unable to drive through the village.

11. Jan Knox, Head Teacher of Houghton School and a member of the Working Party, is acutely aware of the disruption caused by a minority of parents who park in an inconsiderate manner near the school and is working very hard to persuade them to do otherwise. This includes such measures as:

- writing regular articles in the school magazine and leaflets which the children take home asking parents to park considerately – including publishing the details of vehicles parked inconsiderately
- exploring ways to increase the number of children who walk to school by for example the re-introduction of the "Walking Bus" from The Black Horse car park to school
- amending the School Travel Plan to include amongst other things the installation of additional fencing along Main Street in front of the Old Rectory. **Comment:** this would provide additional safety measures for children walking to school and would act as a barrier to vehicles parking on the pavement

12. The Working Party **recommends** that the Parish Council should:

- work closely with Houghton School in devising and implementing measures to alleviate inconsiderate parking in this area of the village
- in the summer of 2013 when traffic regulations are due to change, explore with Leicestershire County Council the possibility of painting Junction Protection Markings (JPM) on the corner of Main Street and St Catharine's Way
- consider placing small notices on the left hand verge of St Catharine's Way urging motorist not to park on that side of the road
- explore with Houghton Cricket Club if they would consider developing their existing car parking area and opening it up for use by parents dropping off and picking up their children from school (as suggested in the generic measures section above – paragraph 7 refers)

- explore the installation of electronic Speed Warning Signs near the school. **Comment:** there is example of this type of sign at Tugby

Parking at and around the junction of Main Street and St Catharine's Way when there is a major event at either the Village Hall or St Catharine's Church

13. The staging of major events, such as weddings and funerals at the church and the Annual Craft Fair and the LOROS Walk at the Village Hall, mean that there is a sudden large influx of vehicles into the village. Whilst traffic can still generally flow reasonably well, there have been times when it has not and there was one memorable occasion when the entire area became gridlocked. The parking around the Village Hall for this year's Annual Craft Fair was so chaotic that the police eventually had temporarily to shut Main Street to traffic.
14. The Working Party **recommends** that the Parish Council obtain agreement from the Village Hall Committee and Parochial Church Council that they obtain assurances from anyone organising an event at either place to have a robust plan for parking. This could include, for example, ensuring that sufficient cones are in place on the road to stop parking on one side of the road and/or obtaining agreement to use additional parking spaces elsewhere, such as the school or Houghton Cricket Club. If this means the organisers of an event have to pay for someone to organise the parking, so be it. Anyone organising such an event must not be allowed to abrogate responsibility for the potential traffic chaos that may ensue.

Parking on St Catharine's Way outside the Newsagents and Studio Image

15. Inconsiderate parking which leads to traffic problems in this area occurs rarely. It does so however when the parking bay outside the Newsagents and Studio Image and the space by the pavement outside numbers 2 and 4 St Catharine's Way are full and motorists park opposite on the other side of the road. As with inconsiderate parking near the school, there have been occasions in 2012 when cars have parked on both sides of St Catharine's Way outside the Newsagents and Studio Image which has meant that the 747 bus has been unable to pass. The Working Party **recommends** that the Parish Council:
- writes to owners of the Newsagents urging them to use their car park at the back of their shop rather than park in the bay at the front
 - places a notice on the lamp post outside the Newsagent stating that these are temporary parking spaces and should not be used for long term parking. **Comment:** there is compelling evidence that some motorists park their cars in these bays for long periods while they catch the bus into Leicester
 - places a notice on the lamp post opposite the parking bay urging motorists not to effectively double park, thereby narrowing the access for other vehicles and in particular large vehicles such as buses. **Note:** the owners of Studio Image now display their own sign encouraging drivers not to use the spaces for long term parking

Other Potential Measures Rejected the Working Party

16. During the course of its various deliberations the Working Party explored a number of other possible measures to alleviate inconsiderate parking in Houghton. We discussed these with Greg

Payne (Leicestershire County Council) when he joined members of the Working Party to talk about our plans and to walk round the village on 5th November 2012. The following is a list of those schemes we discussed with him and which we subsequently rejected as he advised us that they would either be too costly and/or impractical to implement:

- installation of additional Tarmac Speed Humps on Main Street
- installation of Chicanes on Main Street
- introduction of a One Way System in Houghton
- painting of yellow lines (with the possible exception of JPM as specified above)
- painting diagonal parking bay lines in the parking bay outside the Newsagents and Studio Image
- creating additional parking bays on the verge of St Catharine's Way (opposite the Bowling Green)
- relocating the school bus stops in the village (eg away from the Co-op to the Black Horse)

Way Forward

17. The Working Party recognises that:

- the measures it has outlined in this report will not immediately solve the problems villagers have experienced over many years from inconsiderate parking. Indeed even if the Parish Council were to implement them all it is likely that they would simply alleviate the worst excesses.
- it is impossible to please all the people, all the time and while some may support a particular measure others may be opposed to it. The Working Party as a body supports the thrust of this report although some members have reservations about specific measures.
- before any new measures are implemented they must have the support of the majority of the residents of Houghton
- there are consequences of not successfully addressing the problem of inconsiderate parking in Houghton. These are:
 - potential injury or worse to pedestrians
 - potential loss of bus service through Houghton
 - inability of the emergency services, particularly the Fire Service, to access parts of the village
 - continued inconvenience to Houghton residents
 - adverse effect on children's education – difficulty in teaching safety awareness
 - potential damage to property and other parked vehicles

18. The Working Party therefore **recommends** that the Parish Council:

- considers the recommendations contained in this report
- publishes the report on the PC website
- consults widely with villagers by:
 - holding a public meeting to discuss the various issues raised in this report

- issues a village wide questionnaire (similar to the recent Broadband Survey) to collect data, obtain villagers views on their perceptions of parking problems and their thoughts on the various possible solutions to these problems.

Huw Francis

(Chairman, Working Party on Car Parking and Traffic Management Issues in Houghton)

17th December 2012