

DEF response to Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document May 2019

At present the ever-increasing demand for parking space in residential areas leads to widespread abuse of pavements, to the detriment of pedestrians and especially mobility scooter users, and of open green spaces leading to a deterioration in those public assets which of aesthetic and nature conservation value.

Police and Dacorum Borough Council have a history of being keen to place upon each other the responsibility for challenging these abuses. Current DBC policy is to limit residential parking schemes, where pavement parking is an offence, to exceptional cases such as commuter parking, while the police say that the prevention of pavement parking is not a high priority for them.

The increase in demand is exacerbated by multi-vehicle owning households. For instance the house opposite us in Ridge Lea deployed up to eight vehicles for a period when the three (triplet) children had reached 17 and had live-in partners with their trade vehicles. Though this number has since reduced to the level where none of their vehicles normally need to park in the road, our next door neighbour's house still typically has three on the road and a similar number on the drive and garage. In nearby Lower Sales a large van has been parked for years blocking the pavement and has seldom if ever been moved or used, other than possibly for storage. After a year or more of my lobbying local police a fine for obstruction was issued, with the result that the van is generally now parked so that it is possible for a slim person to get past on the pavement. These cases illustrate the fundamental economic truth that if something is free - in this case parking space - there will be an excess of takers.

Residential parking schemes should become the norm rather than the exception for Dacorum, as it is in for instance Brighton and St. Albans. This would help steer people's decisions as to how many cars per household to have in the direction advocated by the Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document. In addition, and particularly in new housing developments all walkways, green corridors, verges and open spaces should be planned defensively with potential parking abuse in mind.

The above matters have been extensively discussed at the Dacorum Environmental Forum. See Item 7 of Minutes for pavement parking :

<http://dacenvforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/20130523-Minutes-full-meeting.pdf>

. . . and Item 4 for green space parking:

<http://dacenvforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/081118-DEF-Minutes-8th-Nov-2018-1.pdf>

As an example of the police's position on pavement parking, here is text from a sample E-mail response to me (8th Feb 2019) from a police Inspector from Dacorum Safer Neighbourhood Team

"Good afternoon

My officer has walked the location and has responded

"... it is not a major route and the volume of traffic is low, and we have not had any reports from local residents of any issues as I guess these vehicles are residents and they do not have anywhere else to park".

My officer's response suggests that the 'Threat, Risk and Harm' level is low which drives Police decision making.

I am aware that the lack of parking options is replicated all around that area. Should vehicles be prevented from parking then it would simply displace the problem causing additional pressures on other nearby roads. Any longer term solution would therefore likely involve the need for investment in proper parking facilities for car owners and in view of this, it cannot be a priority for police, I am afraid.

If the situation becomes a serious problem for others and I get further complaints then I will discuss the matter with the local councillor and Local Authority to find the best way forward. Any solution should involve engagement with the local residents who need to be able to park whilst allowing emergency service vehicle access."

20/8/2019