Car Park Advisory Group Meeting 07.05.2013

Minutes of the ultimate meeting of Otford Car Park Advisory Group with OPC Highways Committees Councillors, held in the Hope Room, Otford Village Memorial Hall on Tuesday 7th May 2013 at 8pm

Present:
Cllrs Mrs. J. Howe, H. Leicester and M. Whitehead
Advisory Group representatives
S.Yates – School parents
S.Whale and T.Bosworth – High St Residents
J. Pyman – Otford Sporting Association (OSA)
M. Carter – Otford Village Memorial Halls (OVMH) and OSA
R. Dullage – OVMH
G. Skinner and J. Cave – Otford Village Traders
G.Dykes and D. Palmer Brody – Otford Allotments Association (OAA)
K.Drake plus 1 – Sevenoaks Chronicle/Other interested parties

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND INTRODUCTIONS

Cllr Howe, on behalf of the Parish Council, publicly thanked Sarah Yates for her very efficient compilation of the minutes.

D.Callway - Gatehouse Nursery, V. Stanley – Otford Methodist Church (OMC), D.Barley – High Street Residents (substitute reps present), J. Belfield and D.Inskip – Otford Nursery absent.

1.1 No representative from Otford Primary School present
1.2 Mr G.Dykes – Chair of OAA, Mrs S Whale and T.Bosworth - representing High Street Residents in DB’s absence introduced to all present.

2. MINUTES

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 14th March 2013 were read through by Cllr Mrs Howe and discussed.

3. FURTHER RESPONSE FROM OAA

3.1 Discussion of point 3.2 from last meeting@s minutes regarding access to the OAA parking area.

Cllr Mrs Howe stated that Mr Sparrow, owner of OBM does not wish any change to the existing arrangement, which is, that the access to the allotments is a private access way and that no public right of way exists. Access must remain restricted to allotments users only. This was confirmed by GD of OAA. HL queried if “occasional use”, for example by High Street Residents, would still pose a problem. GD confirmed that the objections from OBM would remain the same.
4. FURTHER RESPONSE FROM OTFORD NURSERY STAFF

Cllr Howe queried whether there was any update from ON regarding the payment of /contribution to parking charges by the employer. The understanding from discussions with the Nursery staff is that it would not be economically viable for the employer to meet the parking costs of staff. It was confirmed that half day nursery workers were now utilising alternative parking in Bubblestone Rd and staff working the whole day were also using Warham Road and the stretch along the A225 (Sevenoaks Rd) from the Duck Pond.

Cllr Howe confirmed that the restriction times in place in Bubblestone Road are dictated by the company that monitors the area (small team administers whole district) and therefore no change to those times can be implemented.

The position for the Gatehouse Nursery staff and employer remain unknown in respect of the above points.

5. REPORT FROM HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE

5.1 Cllr Howe advised that there had been 3 attendees from OPC to the meeting with KCC and Kent Education, held in Maidstone, regarding the school expansion. Kent Education made it clear during the meeting that their remit was Educational Development only; they take no consideration for parking or infrastructure. They advised that there should be a revised Travel Plan to be implemented by the School in response to the expansion.

Cllr Whitehead advised that the School’s current travel plan really only shows the travel sphere of the current pupil population. It refers to potential Walking Bus proposals but little else. SY advised the group that the School had recently re-visited the Walking Bus proposals, asking for feedback and support from Parents; however, to date interest and volunteers had not been forthcoming.

The Cllrs confirmed that the revised travel plan should be led by the school and that they await further information from the School. PO advised that the School were working on the revised plan and would share this with the Parish Council as soon as possible. PO reiterated that the Education Dept will not deal with parking and infrastructure issues. PO asked whether there had been any further consideration to introducing a 20mph limit through the village.

The Cllrs revisited the School’s lack of response to the Car Park P&D implementation. They advised that the response from Kent Education to the School’s deficient parking facilities was that due to the level of expansion being within certain limits, they were not required to reconsider the School’s parking facilities with reference to the Primary School’s facilities guidelines.

Cllrs were asked to comment on the changes to School building plans and they confirmed there had been a significant height increase to new buildings. They did also comment, however, that the Project Management for the new buildings seemed well organised and sympathetic to the Village parking issues.
The Cllrs advised that County Councils are being overridden by central government dictates concerned with addressing the countrywide shortage of school places, but not making necessary funds available.

6. PROPOSALS/IDEAS
6.1 GREEN CAR PARK AND DESIGNATED DROP OFF ZONE.
OPC confirmed that recent estimates for creating a green car park to the rear of the school site were £400,000. Furthering the proposals for such an additional parking facility will require funding from KCC. Comparisons were drawn by interested parties present with other local parking site developments. However, it was highlighted that such sites were in fact re-development of land already owned by the local council and without the same Highways and Access issues posed by the site in Otford. Cllrs advised that further action to KCC and ideas for raising funds towards obtaining an additional parking site could be considered separately from the current group’s remit.

6.2 RENT A DRIVE SCHEME.
Cllr Howe confirmed that the Parish Council would be happy to publicise the Rent-a-Drive scheme through the Parish newsletter. OPC will not be able to recommend any one company, but would be able to direct people to where to find out more information. Cllrs will take back to the Parish Council the question of how best to approach the idea.

6.3 TRIAL RELOCATION OF ALL DAY PARKERS
6.3.1 Cllrs queried the response to the suggestion of local workers utilising alternative parking sites. SY confirmed that ON Staff had been using Bubblestone Rd, Sevenoaks Rd and Wareham Rd. SY also confirmed that some teaching staff and TAs are now using the Sevenoaks Rd to park in. GS advised that the proposal of alternative parking had been further discussed with the Hospice of Hope, but that the high number of staff had continued to pose a problem for obtaining relevant data. GS confirmed she would raise the idea again with HoH leaders.

6.3.2 The group were advised that a letter had been received by OPC from the Vicar at St Bartholomew’s Church confirming that the church car park is for church users only as this was the basis that permission for the car park was made. The car park is now closed until 08.55. RD raised the point that contrary to this, OMC’s recent requests for grants for works would only be granted if the church is open to Community Groups.....

6.4 OVERFLOW/GREEN PARKING TAG ON TO VILLAGE CAR PARK
PO proposed the idea of a ‘tag on’ to the car park behind the Halls, to be opened up only by the Halls management for long stay or large groups, thereby alleviating the parking situation during busy times. OSA and Halls members both raised concerns regarding where and how to implement boundaries and how to contain where vehicles parked. Queries about the necessary surfacing were also raised as a safety issue for Cricket players. Additional Health and Safety issues around the single entry/exit way were also identified. Lastly, costs around moving the cricket nets would be prohibitive.
6.5 TRUSTEES PROPOSAL
Cllr Howe advised that there were too many concerns. Other Sevenoaks areas had trialled similar ideas and were looking to abandon them. Also, the issues of responsibility and safety remain with OPC. RD advised that the idea of the lease to Trustees was to relinquish OPC of all responsibilities. Cllr Whitehead advised that the land would remain OPC property and as such OPC need to be seen to properly managing the area for the benefit of the whole village. Cllr Whitehead confirmed that the Car Park monitoring/ticketing company would have to agree any changes with OPC and therefore control and management will remain with OPC. He confirmed that OPC’s final stand on this proposal is no.

7. TARIFFS
7.1 Members from the Highways Committee advised the group of a scheme operated at Lady Boswell’s and St Thomas’ schools, whereby parents are issued with a permit to park between 08.30-09.15 and 15.00-15.45, but with no free period of parking for other users. For example, should OPC operate a similar permit scheme the first hour of parking would not be free but a charge of 50 pence would apply. RD and MC confirmed that this would pose a real problem for the Halls and probably result in loss of bookers. Further opposition to the scheme was raised due to administration difficulties, policing correct usage and managing the permit scheme. It was generally agreed that such a scheme would not be appropriate for Otford CP and the previous tariff proposal should stand:

Weekday charges
1st hr FREE (no return within 2 hrs)
2nd and 3rd hrs charged at 50p per hr
Additional hrs charged at £1 per hr

Sundays and Bank Holidays
FREE
(NB To be monitored and reviewed as deemed necessary—see comments below)

Saturdays
1st hr FREE (no return within 2 hrs)
2nd and 3rd hrs charged at 50p per hr
All day charge £2

2 Disabled bays: up to 3hrs parking for Blue Badge Holders only.

Charging period Mon – Sat from 7am to 6pm. Effective from 1st October 2013.

7.2 RESIDENT PERMITS
Annual Residents permits to be available to purchase: lower fee to apply £75 - £100 (to be confirmed), one permit per household, vehicle must be registered to the property, permits not transferable on sale of property – new owners to apply for permit to OPC.

Resident reps present queried the terms of the P&D contract regarding economic viability and the value of Resident permits input. Cllrs confirmed that there is no tie-in to the P&D contract they have selected and that its viability will be reviewed bi-annually. The P&D
operator will not be able to make changes to tariffs or charging periods without OPC approval. Cllrs also confirmed that it would be more valuable to the scheme not to have any Resident permits: the income generated by the permits is not as valuable as the income expected to be generated from a bay not used by a resident.

Cllrs will discuss possibility of additional permits with OPC, but need to know from the Residents the following figures:

1) Exact number of properties with no parking available at all
2) How many of those require 2 permits

7.3 OSA PERMITS
It was agreed that 20 OSA permits could be issued for Saturdays, to be shared between the various Sporting clubs as necessary. Permits are essentially for visiting teams, but spare permits may be used by coaches/club operatives when available. Permits provided to visiting clubs/teams should be given on a deposit basis, to ensure return of the permit to OSA

7.4 SUNDAY CHARGES
Cllr Howe advised that the Highways Committee had some concerns over congestion and parking issues on Sundays. She confirmed that Sundays if the proposals regarding weekends was accepted remain, they would be reviewed should congestion on Sundays become a problem.

The group members pointed out that the thriving activity in the village was part of its essence and well-being. It was also pointed out that should charges be introduced in the CP on Sundays, vehicles would park along the High Street as restrictions do not apply there on Sundays; this would cause far more congestion not solve the problem.

SY queried whether OSA permits would be made available for Sundays too, should charges be introduced? Cllrs advised that that would be considered if charges were deemed necessary for Sundays.

9. OTHER POINTS
9.1 Cllrs confirmed that re-surfacing of the car park is scheduled to begin 12th August 2013. During week 1, half of the car park will remain available for use. During week 2, there will be no parking available. In addition, the settling period following resurfacing could take 10 days.

9.2 RD queried OPC plans to create a flow system around the car park. Cllr Howe confirmed that as part of the resurfacing a flow system will be introduced, without the loss of any spaces (back right hand corner to be filled out). Cllr Howe advised this is in conjunction with introducing P&D (not instead of) and that the aim is to help improve movement around the car park.

9.3 EFFECTS
Members of the group asked the Cllrs for their thoughts on dealing with the likely ‘knock-on’ effects from introducing P&D; commuter parking in Sevenoaks Rd, Wareham Rd etc. Cllrs
advised that any changes to parking restrictions in these roads fall to Sevenoaks District Council and would be outside of OPC control.

9.4 TRAFFIC SIMULATION PROPOSAL
RD advised all present that he had attended a meeting of the Otford Society recently and read out a letter/proposal for a traffic simulation aimed at highlighting the effects the increase in school traffic will have for everyone in the village.

There was some discussion around the aim of the simulation; not an attack on the school, but an attempt to highlight to KCC the impact the additional traffic will have in terms of safety, access, congestion, parking etc. The simulation requires 40 vehicles (excluding Wareham Rd residents who will be parking on the road instead of their driveways). Proposed for 16th/17th May. Queries were raised around coverage of the simulation with a general consensus that wider scale coverage as possible should be obtained, including local and national news, radio and newspapers.

10. DATE OF NEXT HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE MEETING
The date of the next Highways Committee meeting is 17th June 2013.

This meeting was closed at 10.00 pm