
Meeting: Traffic Management Meeting
Date: 19th January 2010
Subject: Henlow Camp Maintenance and S106 Enhancement, Dispute for Determination
Report of: Basil Jackson
Summary: The report proposes that the Portfolio holder for Safer and Stronger Communities determine the delivery of the scheme, noting the unresolved dispute with Parish Members.

Contact Officer: Lee Baldry, Senior Project Manager
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: Silsoe and Shillington, Langford and Henlow
Function of: Parishes of Henlow and Stondon Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

Financial:

The scheme is programmed for FY2009/10. Subject to the Portfolio Holder's decision, it will be rolled over to FY2010/11. Expenditure to date has been design fee.

The scheme is funded by £84k of Section 106 contributions and a capital contribution of £25k for associated footway foundation work.

Legal:

None as a result of this report.

Risk Management:

A decision to terminate the scheme would necessitate Section 106 funds being returned to the developer. Design fees accrued to date would require separate CBC budget.

The Section 106 contribution is for 'enhancement.' Outcomes outside this brief may cause Central Bedfordshire Council to default on the planning obligations.

Redesigning the scheme would require additional budget for design fees.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

None as a result of this report.

Equalities/Human Rights:

This report and recommendation does not have any implications under the Human Rights Act 1998.

Community Safety:

None from this report.

Sustainability:

None as a result of this report.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

that the decision is made to proceed with the Type 2 plan.

Scheme description

1. The scheme aims to enhance the village centre of Henlow Camp. This will be achieved by use of improved materials in the footway, kerbing layout revisions, provision of new trees and improved street furniture. A general layout is presented in Appendix A.
2. The scheme is bisected by the Parish boundary, between Henlow and Stondon Parish Councils. Cllr. Drinkwater has played a substantial liaison role throughout.
3. The design has been developed with Members from both Henlow and Stondon parishes over an extended period.
4. The result is a scheme which will deliver a series of enhancements to the operation and appearance of the Henlow Camp village centre, meeting its brief for enhancement whilst also meeting the ambitions of the community.

Unresolved issues

5. The site has many adjacent businesses; a majority without off-street parking. Customers park indiscriminately on the footways, which damage them and contribute to poor appearance. However, none of the defects meet criteria for immediate maintenance.

6. It not a good use Council funds to enhance footways which suffer indiscriminate parking. Premature failure would result. It has therefore been necessary to produce a design which allows alternative parking and strengthen the foundations so that the new surface may achieve its full service life.
7. Members are sensitive to the parking demands of the businesses, and perceive the parking issues to be the primary focus of the scheme. This is not the case and any proposed revision is a born only of a need for the scheme to be sustainable. Officers are equally sensitive and have responded with a design which does not reduce overall parking opportunity.
8. The design will redistribute parking into safe and legal spaces and restore the footway for pedestrian trafficking. Where current parking (legitimate or not) might be slightly reduced, alternative is provided elsewhere.
9. Members feel that the Type 2 plan does not meet their parking ambitions.

Progress to date

10. Officers have been clear that full Member and community support is integral to a successful scheme. Design work has therefore been open and inclusive at all times.
11. The culmination was Members' approval to the Type 2 plan presented in Appendix A, and evidenced in Appendix B.
12. Henlow Parish Council gave approval, subject to determination of two specific parking issues summarised above.
13. Despite concerns made clear at the time, Officers agreed to reconsider input from Henlow Parish Council Members Joy and Phillips and the Chairman, Cllr. Wiles. Members' input was worked up into a drawing which was subjected to Safety Assessment, presented in Appendix C.
14. The Safety Assessment reported concerns with the revisions proposed by Henlow Parish Council Members.
15. Henlow Parish Council Members do not agree with the findings of the Safety Assessment, as discussed in Cllr. Wiles' email presented in Appendix D.
16. Officers consider that overruling the Assessment would result in a site layout which is unsafe and place unreasonable risk on the Authority. Officers therefore feel unable to progress Henlow Parish Council Members' proposals

Need for escalation

17. Central Bedfordshire Council Member support is clear, lead by Cllr. Drinkwater as presented in Appendix E.
18. Stondon Parish Council fully support the Type 2 plan presented in Appendix A.

19. Although supportive of most elements of the scheme, Henlow Parish Council does not accept Officers' previous recommendation to pursue the Type 2 plan and cite a wish to redesign some areas.
20. The scheme has enjoyed a long period of consideration and all avenues have been fully investigated. Officers therefore consider that no further redesign is appropriate.

Conclusion and Next Steps

21. Officers recommend delivery of the Type 2 plan with no amendments.
22. A decision to do so is required from the Portfolio Holder, mindful of the issues cited by Henlow Parish Council.
23. A decision to proceed with the Type 2 plan would confirm the scheme onto the FY2010/11 programme of works.

Appendices:

Appendix A - Type 2 plan

Appendix B - Support from Henlow and Stondon Parish Councils

Appendix C - Safety Assessment

Appendix D - Response from Cllr. Wiles, Chairman, Henlow Parish Council

Appendix E - Support from Cllr. Drinkwater

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

None

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands

Appendix A - Type 2 plan

Appendix B - Support from Henlow and Stondon Parish Councils

Fri 26/06/2009 12:23

Lee - Many thanks again for attending the Highways & Open Spaces Committee meeting on 22nd June, your attendance was much appreciated, especially given up your time out of hours so to speak.

The Members appreciated being able to have their input on the New Layout Type 2A, and to hear your views on consultations to date.

As you know Henlow Parish Council have always been very supportive, and as requested would like to give this written support of the concept and details as shown to the Type 2 layout presented on 22nd June.

The main points and concerns raised on the night were:

1. Investigation of possible dedication of strip of concrete to be incorporated to new footpath o/s Fine Wines, Flamez Chicken & Pizza House, Chicken 'n' Spice Take Away
2. Provision of 'herringbone parking instead to the lay-by shown outside properties in no 1 above.
3. Consideration be given to moving the parking bays shown outside Henlow Tandoori, Blockbuster Video, Crest Cars and Racing Ltd to the opposite (south) side of the access road
4. Keeping the bollards.

The Members thank you for taking on board their concerns, and for promising to look into the details as listed above.

Please let me know if any further information is desired from Henlow PC . Regards - Bert
Bert Schrier
Clerk to Henlow Parish Council

Thu 25/06/2009 10:32

Good morning Lee,

At our Stondon PC meeting last night I am pleased to say we accepted your latest drawings for the Henlow Camp enhancement.

Also this acceptance was unanimous.

Some comment has been expressed on Henlow PC having opposing views on Bollards and Trees.

As there is no known pedestrian accidents in this area it would seem questionable particularly as the bin and lamppost in their requested area have been the only casualty's.

Bollards if low could cause damage to cars visiting the hairdressers etc. anyone with concern for pedestrian safety should perhaps first visit the Persimmon estate and see the vast areas of narrow roads with NO footpaths even en route to playgrounds.

I personally have a Passion for trees but worry about the practicality of these chosen positions, However I will respect Henlow's final decisions.

Thank you for your patience, professionalism and help throughout this long consultation.

Regards,
Cllr. Kerry Dellar

Appendix C - Safety Assessment

Sent: 12 October 2009 09:38

With regards to your recent Safety Assessment request for the proposed parking arrangements at Henlow Camp, please see below for our response:

It is considered that the proposal to relocate the existing parking bays located on the Service Road to the offside narrow footway strip, is inherently dangerous. Drivers will be forced to open their doors towards live traffic on the main road, in a location where vehicles exiting the roundabout's circulatory carriageway will be naturally straying towards the nearside of the carriageway as they leave the junction. In places the footway strip is extremely narrow, and drivers' doors on larger cars will encroach into the carriageway. In any event, the strip is too narrow to safely accommodate a pedestrian leaving / accessing a vehicle. The strip also has a significant slope across it, which could lead to trips and falls into the live carriageway. There are very serious concerns that drivers / passengers would be at a high risk of being struck by vehicles passing on the main carriageway, and it is strongly recommended that this proposal is not pursued.

Regarding the formal echelon parking proposed on Hitchin Road; it is likely that eastbound drivers leaving the roundabout will on occasion enter the bays forwards across the opposing flow, rather than reverse-in / forwards-out from the westbound approach as intended. This will always involve inherent risk of collisions, particularly when reversing back out into the main line to leave the bays. However, this is arguably no more dangerous than the present arrangement. The main concern here will be that the pedestrian desire line along the footway adjacent to the edge of carriageway will be blocked by parked vehicles, and pedestrians will be at risk of collisions from vehicles entering / leaving the bays. Presently vehicles parking here pull fully forwards encroaching into the (non-highway) concrete strip fronting the shops. Following formalisation of the echelon parking, this strip will not be used and blocked by concrete bollards; cars will be forced to block the footway. Pedestrians would be highly unlikely to divert via the shop frontage, and in any event, it would be inappropriate for the Highway Authority to provide a discontinuous footway. This should be given serious consideration.

If you require further assistance, please let me know.

Regards

Engineer (Road Safety) | Bedfordshire Highways

Appendix D - Response from Cllr. Wiles, Chairman, Henlow Parish Council

Mon 02/11/2009 14:11

Lee,

Firstly, can I thank you for your efforts in this matter so far. I understand that this has not been an easy project, and you should be congratulated for having navigated it this far.

However having said that, you were quite right in assuming that Henlow Parish Council (HPC) are very disappointed with the non-inclusion of either of our suggested parking revisions. You will recall that these were discussed at length at the last site meeting we had, and having spent time observing the existing parking situation, we believed you understood our concerns, and were led to believe that some level of echelon parking in the 'Fine Wines' quadrant would be achievable.

Whilst we are still very keen for this scheme to go ahead (and as you will recall, always have been), we are not only very disappointed by this latest response, we are deeply concerned by the safety implications of pressing ahead with the existing type 2 layout without the inclusion of the echelon parking, and would call for this decision to be reviewed urgently.

Our key points are:

1) You once again state that you believe the Type 2 layout does not reduce the number of legitimate parking opportunities in the area.

This may well be close to the truth, but misses the point. If we do not also provide parking opportunities for some of the non-legitimate parking that occurs daily at peak times, then these people will continue to park wherever they can, in non-legitimate ways, mounting pavements, blocking the carriageway close to the roundabout, etc. This will produce a situation FAR more dangerous than the supposed reasons why you cannot include echelon parking.

2) Having studied the Safety Assessment and observed the area ourselves in great detail, we CANNOT agree with your conclusion that this scheme 'contravenes the formal safety assessment'. In fact we feel that the contrary conclusion can, and should, be drawn.

I detail the relevant points below.

The first point made is that drivers travelling east will enter the echelon parking facing the wrong way. Nothing that we have observed to date will make direction of entry mandatory. Drivers coming from whichever direction will enter forwards or backwards as suits their driving skills. Many do not reverse into parking spaces anywhere as they cannot judge the length of their vehicle. The Assessor then goes on to say "However, this is arguably no more dangerous than the present arrangement." There are many towns around the country where this type of parking works well. One local example being Stevenage Old Town, where the parking is in fact perpendicular to the road, is busier, and there are arguably significantly more distractions for motorists on the road itself. It should also be noted that ingress and egress from the proposed echelon parking would be from a B road, whilst the scheme as proposed is allowing similar movements outside Camp Stores, directly from and onto an A road, and in closer proximity to the roundabout - which is surely more dangerous?

The Assessors primary concern is for pedestrians. They are concerned that "the footway adjacent to the edge of carriageway will be blocked by parked vehicles, and pedestrians will be at risk of collisions from vehicles entering / leaving the bays." Supposedly, at present, "vehicles parking here pull fully forwards encroaching into the (non-highway) concrete strip fronting the shops." This is factually incorrect. Whilst it does happen in some cases, we also see many instances where cars drive forwards onto this area and stop with the rear of the car covering the "so-called" pavement. I took photographs of the parking here during our last site visit and none of the cars parked at that time were encroaching on the strip of land fronting the shops. We also have to remember that cars are currently parking perpendicular to the main carriageway, whereas an echelon arrangement would clearly have the effect of reducing the 'effective length' in that direction. If the Assessor is concerned about pedestrians, then the only safe place along this stretch is immediately in front of the shops which dedication coupled with a raised kerb or a couple of bollards, will provide.

I hope that given the above information, you will be able to reconsider, and get back to us with a more practical, safer, solution in the near future.

I look forward to hearing from you, and working together to reach the best solution for all.

Kind Regards,
Tim Wiles, Chairman
Henlow Parish Council

Appendix E - Support from Cllr. Drinkwater

Sun 22/11/2009 19:53

Dear Lee

Re: Henlow Camp Enhancement

I would like to add my support to this project. The project team, lead by Lee Baldry have worked with the 2 Parish Councils of Henlow and Stondon to bring together a scheme which will enhance the shopping area. It has been neglected for some considerable time and the funding from a Section 106 will allow the area to be brought upto standard.

Regards

Rita