
Meeting: Delegated Decisions by the Executive Member for Community Services on Traffic Regulation Orders
Date: 1 June 2016
Subject: Pilgrims Close and High Street, Flitwick – Petition requesting action to address an on-street parking issue
Report of: Paul Mason, Head of Highways
Summary: This report is to note the receipt of a petition submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council and suggest a way forward

Contact Officer: Paul Salmon
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Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: Flitwick
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The petition is in relation to the safe and efficient use of the highway network

Financial:

It is possible that work could be funded from minor traffic management and parking budgets

Legal:

None from this report

Risk Management:

None from this report

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

None from this report

Equalities/Human Rights:

None from this report

Community Safety:

None from this report

Sustainability:

None from this report

RECOMMENDATION(S):

It is recommended that a parking restriction proposal be published in during the current financial year and that the lead petitioner be informed of the outcome of the meeting

Background and Information

1. A petition has been received, signed by 48 people, requesting the Council to address the major safety concerns arising due to vehicles being permitted to park on the High Street in close proximity to the Pilgrims Close junction. Vehicles parked at this location dangerously block the view of traffic approaching from the north for drivers attempting to pull out of Pilgrims Close onto the High Street.
2. The request for action appears to be supported by local people and Flitwick Town Council.
3. Officers have attended a site meeting with residents of Pilgrims Close to view the situation and discuss possible remedial measures.
4. It is accepted that parked cars on High Street do obscure visibility for drivers emerging from Pilgrims Close. The increase in on-street parking in the area is probably due to a general increase in the level of parking, but also because the Council has introduced parking restrictions elsewhere in Flitwick to address concerns about commuter parking. It is possible that there has been some migration of parking from those roads to the High Street/Pilgrims Close area.
5. There are existing parking restrictions in High Street and Pilgrims Close, but they terminate just to the north of the junction. It would be a relatively straightforward exercise to extend the restrictions to cover the length of road concerned.
6. It is recommended that a parking restriction proposal be published within the current financial year. The Executive Member will recall that, whenever possible, the Council seeks to process requests for small scale parking controls in area-based batches in the interests of cost effectiveness. It is suggested that this approach be adopted in this situation.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Petition and accompanying correspondence

Appendix B – Location plan

Appendix A

We, the signatories of this petition, being vehicle drivers and residents of Pilgrims Close, Flitwick, call upon the Highways Department at Central Bedfordshire Council to:

1. Address the major road safety concerns arising from vehicles being permitted to park on the High Street in close proximity to the Pilgrims Close junction. Vehicles parked at this location dangerously block the view of traffic approaching from the north for drivers attempting to pull out of Pilgrims Close onto the High Street.
2. Note the problem is exacerbated because Pilgrims Close is at the brow of a hill on the High Street when approaching from the north. This means that when several cars are parked, vision of approaching traffic for those exiting the Close is totally obscured, making it exceptionally dangerous and posing a serious accident risk. The simplest improvement would be to extend the existing single yellow parking restriction line by about 6m to the north, although a more thorough solution would be to further upgrade the single yellow line to a double yellow line.
3. Note that a previous letter dated 29 February 2016, from the lead petitioner to Highways CBC, describes the problem in greater detail. A copy of this letter accompanies this petition.

Important note: The overall number of signatures attached to this petition will be reflective of the fact that Pilgrims Close is a small cul-de-sac of only 18 dwellings.

The letter at Reference regarding the ongoing parking issues states that the Council would like to see the depth of Town Council and resident support over the matter in question to help advance the case.

Therefore please find attached to this letter the following:

1. A letter from Flitwick Town Council expressing their agreement with the need for additional parking controls to address the associated road safety concerns.
2. A Petition containing 48 signatures from residents and other users of Pilgrims Close in support of the case. Please note that Pilgrims Close contains only 18 residential properties, with driver representations from every household having been obtained (along with others) as an indication of the residents' strength of feeling on this matter.

Thank you for your attention and I await further developments in light of the above.

I am writing to report a major road safety concern at the junction of Pilgrims Close with the A5120 (High Street) in Flitwick and request that the Council gives consideration to a potential remedy to the problem.

As a resident of Pilgrims Close for some 14 years, I have noticed an increasing tendency, especially over the last 12 months, for vehicles to be long-term parked during daylight hours on the High Street just to the north of, and adjacent to, the Pilgrims Close junction. This is on a short stretch of the road (approx.6 metres long) from the junction itself up to the dropped kerb of the first property (No 24). I have attached a simple sketch map to illustrate this. From observation, it seems fairly certain that the owners of these vehicles are commuters or visitors to the area, rather than nearby residents.

The High Street is an exceedingly busy main road and the presence of vehicles, when parked as stated, dangerously obstructs the view to the north for vehicles exiting Pilgrims Close, especially when turning right. The problem is made critically worse when these vehicles are parked partly on the kerb, as they often are, which then totally obscures the view of oncoming traffic from the northerly direction. This then makes it impossible to safely exit the junction. Apart from normal traffic, the safety of motorcyclists passing this junction must also be of concern. Also, the road going north is on a descending gradient, which compounds the problem, because approaching traffic is then hidden below the windscreen level of the parked vehicles. I have attached for your convenience a series of photographs to illustrate the severity of this safety concern.

This safety concern is further impacted (albeit sporadically) by vehicles sometimes queueing to enter the Car Wash premises on the northbound side of the road immediately opposite Pilgrims Close. When these queues form, together with cars being parked to the north as stated earlier, a "staggered" bottleneck is created, with traffic effectively circumventing the stationary vehicles in both directions. As Pilgrims Close is centred on this bottleneck, this makes exiting the junction even more dangerous. I have also illustrated this on the first sketch diagram.

I have observed these problems worsening over the last year, having myself narrowly missed a serious collision with a high speed emergency vehicle (paramedic estate car not sounding a siren) when exiting Pilgrims Close caused by my vision of oncoming traffic being almost totally obscured owing to cars parked as stated. Since that event, I have been keeping an occasional log with the view to reporting the matter to the Council with appropriate evidence.

However, an event on 27 February 2016, in which my 18 year old daughter narrowly missed a very serious collision at this junction for the same reasons as stated, has galvanised me into drawing this safety problem to your attention without further delay. You will see that amongst the photographs attached is one dated 27 February 2016, which was taken only minutes after this near collision and which serves to illustrate the danger posed by these parked vehicles that gave rise to the incident.

I have canvassed the opinion of other residents in Pilgrims Close, who all concur that this as a very serious safety matter, all having experienced identical problems at varying times. Some have even taken to leaving notes on the parked vehicles in question, but this seems to have had very little impact.

I do appreciate the Council has to operate on a tight budget and prioritise its work accordingly. However, I would like to offer what may be a fairly simple remedy to prevent this safety problem from arising. Currently, there is an existing parking restriction line, 8am – 6pm, which applies over a stretch of about 3 to 4 metres north from the Pilgrims Close junction – please see my second enclosed sketch plus photographs. The general consensus is that this line does not keep parked vehicles sufficiently far away from the Pilgrims Close junction to allow a safe field of visibility of approaching traffic. The suggestion is that this line ought be extended, ideally by about a further 6 metres in the northerly direction of the High Street, say as far as the first dropped kerb to the property at No. 24.

I notice that the current parking restriction lines in Pilgrims Close are very badly worn. However, whilst it might be possible to defer any remedial improvement until these lines are repainted, unless this work is imminent and given the serious nature of this safety issue, I would very much hope that any agreed action is not unduly delayed.

I look forward to your reply on this safety matter and very much hope that something may be done soon to improve the situation before a serious accident occurs.

Appendix B

