



Traffic and Parking Issues - Derry Hill School

The report updates the Council on West Ward members consideration of traffic and parking issues relating to travel to and from Derry Hill School.

Background

At its April 2024 meeting, the Council considered a Highway Improvement Request Form submitted by the Head Teacher of Derry Hill School, requesting the renewal of the School Keep Clear road markings and to consider the introduction of two disabled parking bays on Church Rd. The Council unanimously resolved *“the West Ward Councillors would look at the issues in greater depth and with the school to establish what can and can’t be done in relation to parking issues”*

Wiltshire Council Highways Department were requested to renew the worn Keep Clear markings which they completed in late spring. Cllr Rees met with the Head Teacher regarding disabled bays and also PCSO Mark Cook who previously expressed concerns about wider congestion and safety issues relating to travel to and from Derry Hill School.

Wiltshire Council officers were contacted regarding the introduction of disabled spaces near to schools and confirmed that -

“The disabled parking bays which are scattered within residential streets are provided on an advisory basis only. They are not backed by a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), have no time limits, and are not enforceable. Whilst they are provided to assist individual blue badge holders, anyone can park within these. Applications are vetted by our Adult Care team, and bays are only provided if the individual meets certain criteria (although I am not sure of the detail), and Highways are content to do so on safety grounds. We are not at liberty to place these where existing parking controls are in place as this would require a change to the TRO. These are not normally provided in town centre areas or where other parking controls have been established nearby. I have checked the rules on where Blue Badge Holders are entitled to park and where they must not park. Typically, they cannot park within areas where there are loading bans applied (although a TRO can be written to exclude blue badge holders from this rule) nor can they park on School Zig Zags or within Bus Stop Clearways.

On Church Road, the individual could park on double yellow lines, so long as they are not causing an obstruction for through traffic”.

Under these circumstances it was not felt appropriate to support the introduction of disabled spaces on Church Road.

West Ward Councillors were invited to observe traffic and parking conditions over the summer and autumn school terms and met on 13th November to consider the issues.

Main issues identified

1. The number of children travelling to and from Derry Hill School by car appears to have increased significantly over the last 5 or so years.
2. Congestion and conflict on a large section of Church Road (between the school and the Bowood white gates) is caused by an almost a continuous line of ‘parents’ cars parked on the north side of the road. This obstructs visibility for cars travelling east who cannot see far enough to give way to westbound vehicles that have priority.
3. Increasing numbers of cars parking on Church Rd near the sharp bend at the Bowood white gates (possibly dog walkers) can cause additional problems when this coincides with school times.
4. Frequent parking by up to 8 parents in the currently unoccupied private car park of Bethesda House. Bethesda is the subject of a planning application for conversion to 9 flats with 11 parking spaces. The reuse of the former residential home will inevitably end its unauthorised use by parents and result in up to 8 more cars seeking to park near the school.
5. The nearest and most convenient parking spaces outside the school are almost always taken by school staff who arrive well before parents and leave after the afternoon peak pick up time. This forces parents to park further away from the school, increasing walk distances and reduces the turnover of parking spaces.
6. There is some abuse of the School Keep Clear markings by a minority of parents but also infringements by school coaches and vehicles delivering to the school who cannot park legally near the school due to staff occupying all the nearest on-street spaces.

7. Whilst Lansdowne Crescent (East) has some long stay, on-street parking by residents along with staff and visitors from Kingstone House residential home the problems of congestion and conflict are generally confined to school 'drop off' and 'pick up times'. The additional demand for parking by parents adds to the number of cars parked on Lansdowne Crescent, reducing the road to single way working which combined with the high levels of traffic accessing the leavening the village hall car park causes conflict and safety issues particularly when impatient parents exceed the 20mph speed limit and do not give way to oncoming vehicles when passing parked cars

8. Excessive speed and impatience by drivers is evident at the junction of Petty Lane with Lansdowne Crescent where some parents leaving the hall car park approach the T junction with Lansdowne Crescent/Bowood Close at speeds that would not allow them to give way at the junction. Observations suggest that a surprising number of drivers are not looking to the right before turning left from Petty Lane onto Lansdowne Crescent which is potentially dangerous.

9. Lansdowne Hall car park is very well used by parents to drop off and collect pupils at the school via a pedestrian access into the school from the public footpath (CALW65) adjoining the school. The car park regularly reaches full capacity of about 50 spaces at peak times and can exceed that when cars park in aisles and spill into Petty lane although generally this level of parking does not appear to cause undue problems .

10. There is also evidence that some parents are parking in Chapel St in spaces near to the Village Hall carpark and accessing the school through the carpark and public footpath.

Conclusion

West Ward members were agreed that the current level of journeys to school by car is causing significant delay, inconvenience and some safety issues in Derry Hill.

Ideally the best solution to many of the issues identified would be to reduce the reliance on the car for journeys to Derry Hill School by pupils and staff. However although the school has had a School Travel Plan for some years, the wide catchment area of the school appears to have lead to a increasing levels of car use which cannot be regarded as sustainable or comparable with normal village life.

West Ward members are seeking meetings with the Head Teacher, local police and Wiltshire Council's highway and transport officers to hopefully develop a joint approach to reducing the adverse local impacts of travel to Derry Hill School.

Cllr Ioan Rees