

Appendix G - Parking Plan

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1 Background

Parking is a necessity of modern life, and Benson is not unique in having issues with it. The basic issue is that demand often exceeds supply at varying times of day, with these times differing at the various sites around the village. It should be remembered, that it is widely viewed that parking is an essential for our few remaining shops, and there could well be serious consequences if insufficient were available.

2 Problem Sites

The following sites have all been reported as having issues with parking over recent years, usually at the days/times indicated. Recommended Actions to solve or at least ameliorate the issues are shown below in italics.

2.1 Village Centre

In what is regarded as the village centre, there are about 66 parking spaces available, including the Millstream Car Park (owned by SODC), College Farm Car Park (Owned by BPC) and on street parking. Many of these are taken up by overnight residential parking, and others by people working in the village centre, as a result of which parking for shoppers is becoming an increasing issue. Another factor is possibly the approval of small developments with inadequate (or none) parking provision on the grounds that public parking is available.

Comments have been made about the illegal parking frequently seen when demand is high, usually on restricted sites and in inappropriate places. It is not uncommon for such parking to have safety implications, especially near junctions or across dropped kerbs.

Still a possibility is the transferring of the Millstream Car Park from SODC to BPC, which offer was originally made in 2010 and is still unresolved. The BPC WG set up to examine this reported in August 2010 and again in March 2011 when the Millstream road itself was placed on offer. Council decided that adopting the Car Park might be necessary but that the access road should be declined. The overall strategy was to to retain free parking for our shops and to avoid any SODC charges that were being threatened.

Recommendations:

1. Ensure free parking remains available in the village centre
2. Encourage village access for alternative transport, especially for cyclists and pedestrians.
3. Maximise the use of existing parking, by road bay marking for example
4. Insist on adequate parking facilities for all future developments.

2.2 Oxford Rd

Parking outside the school in Oxford Rd is an issue every school day at drop off and pick up times, with the issue also spreading into adjacent roads such as Horseshoes Lane and Littleworth.

However, Oxford Rd has higher than average recorded speeds in OCC surveys, and there is an argument that the parked cars on Oxford Rd appear to slow the through traffic down by acting as a chicane.

It remains to be seen whether the newly approved Littleworth Rd will act as a by pass, but if it does then Oxford Rd's character will change. If possible, could the new Littleworth Rd provide a designated drop off area, incorporated with a crossing to access the school?

Another long term solution might be to utilise a small part of the playing field to take a foot way, thus releasing road space to create a lay-bye for parking.

Although tried before without great success, it must also be worth trying to work with the school and encourage more walking to the school site. A new robust campaign, perhaps with the addition of something like hi-vis vests might produce dividends.

Recommendations

5. Consider re-routing pavement into playing fields to create space for a lay-bye with time restricted parking.
6. Encourage use of adjacent parking such as Parish Hall & potentially the library.
7. Encourage & facilitate alternative transport to/from school, especially cycling/walking

2.3 Church Rd

Parking outside the Church can create temporary problems whenever there is any function on in the church or church rooms. Church Rd is a busy through road and nose to tail parking can create what is in effect a long stretch of single carriageway.

Suggestions have been made as to making Church Rd one way, but an examination of the traffic flows shows that this always produces critical issue elsewhere, not least outside the school in Oxford Rd. Again the planned Littleworth Rd changes may well have a big effect on Church Rd, but this remains to be seen.

Another suggestion has been to restrict the direction of turn at the A4074/ Church Rd junction, preventing a right turn (towards Oxford) and thus reducing queuing at peak periods. The drawback with this suggestion is that this turn is currently made by the bus service, and re-routing the buses could be complicated.

Recommendations:

- 8 Consider restricting parking on Church Rd in certain places to create passing places.
9. Provide additional parking close to the church, perhaps in St Helen's Avenue.

2.4 St Helens Avenue

The main issue reported is the parking approaching the junction with Church Rd, with insufficient restricted stretches at present. Visibility near the main junction can be seriously impaired, especially for users of the cycle/foot path which exits there.

Much of the parking is believed to be linked with the bus stops nearby, and with leisure parking near the river at certain times - summer weekends being the prime example.

St Helen's Ave is probably the widest road in the village, and with the exception of the junction proximity there are usually no real issues. Parking for the allotments for example, is not a reported problem.

The present road restrictions are white lines, which the County laid down a few years ago at BPC's request. These have no legal basis and are in effect a bluff, but would seem to have been effective.

Recommendations:

10. Restrict more of the highway in the immediate vicinity of the junction.
11. Consider providing new parking facilities adjacent to the A4074 for leisure use.
12. Consider use of old Salt Store for commuter use.
13. Encourage alternative means of transport.

2.5 Preston Crowmarsh Lane

There are issues with parking down the lane from the junction with the A4074 due to the narrow road width. Emergency vehicles could be prevented from accessing at certain times. Some form of discouragement to parking would seem to be required. However, if done in isolation this would merely create a larger problem elsewhere, so an increase in capacity seems the only answer.

There are also issues with parking at the entrance to the lock, especially in spring/summer when the immediate vicinity can be churned into mud by the high volumes of parked cars. To create a short stretch of hard standing would not be difficult nor expensive.

The parking on the slip road from the bus stop can also cause issues, especially if cars double park carelessly on the grass area. One possibility would be to use the triangle of land (owned by the County) adjacent to the slip road for organised additional parking which happens already but in a haphazard way.

The other portion of land owned partially by the county nearer the brook has been considered by BPC in the past as a potential car park, but would likely to be highly contentious and access would be difficult.

Recommendations

14. Slip road parking on the grass seems inevitable, if properly designated this would help
15. The spare piece of land further down the road could arguably be looked at as a parking site, although this would probably be unpopular locally, so is not recommended at this time
16. Similarly, use the the grass area on the Benson side of the A4074 for formal parking, with physical restrictions on accessing/egressing the area.
17. Further down the Preston Crowmarsh lane, the only solution would seem to be road markings, which even if unenforced might deter inconsiderate parking.

3 No Action Recommended

Parking on both sides of Castle Close can create a very narrow carriageway, sometimes insufficient for use by emergency vehicles. Parking in Castle Square in inappropriate places can create issues.

Old London Rd has suffered from inconsiderate parking at times near the Brook St junction. In all these cases however, no immediate actions are recommended. Except below.

4 Additional Parking

It is considered important to maximise existing parking, but also to create additional parking wherever possible. Thus as well as the previously mentioned new sites, facilities such as the library car park should be considered for use

Recommendation:

18 Investigate use of alternative parking sites, eg the library

5. Financial

It would be naïve to expect much financial support from OCC in the present climate, therefore a cost benefit approach might well be necessary. Where parking on grass is suggested for example, it may not be necessary to reinforce the surface. Although this would be ideal, since parking on the grass surface already takes place it might seem a luxury.

Since many of the problems in the Marina area would seem to emanate from the success of the facility there, Council might wish to approach the owners to seek a contribution to costs where appropriate

Recent discussions with Highways would indicate a reluctance to countenance extra white line painting on the grounds that is has no legal standing. However the cost of introducing yellow lines is very high due the legal process and it is unlikely the restrictions could be enforced anyway. Given the history of successfully using white lines in the village for this purpose, it is recommended that efforts be made to persuade County Highways to adopt this low cost approach – although it is likely that the installation cost will fall on the parish.

Recommendations:

19. BPC to approach the Cafe owner on contributing to parking costs

20. BPC to approach County Highways on white line markings

6. Enforcement

The Parish Clerk received an email this year from the TVP Officer responsible, indicating that resources would not permit any increase in parking restriction enforcement – indeed we could well see less.

Given that SODC rejected the idea of taking over Parking Enforcement only last year, it is hard to see any improvement in the immediate future.

7. Summary

- Parking is a necessary problem and there is no easy solution
- Enforcement of restrictions should be improved but is unlikely to happen
- Existing parking to be maximised & alternative parking should be encouraged
- Where possible additional parking should be provided to increase capacity
- Use of cycle/foot routes should be encouraged and facilitated
- New build should have parking for at least two vehicles
- New development roads should have parking areas for visiting cars
- Parking in the village centre is essential for our shops.

Benson PC Transport Group

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