

REPORT: Environment and Urban Renewal
Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 12 September 2012

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Policy & Resources

PORTFOLIO: Transportation

SUBJECT: Objection to Proposed Waiting Restrictions -
Russell Court, Farnworth.

WARDS: Farnworth

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report on objections that have been received following public consultation on a proposed Traffic Regulation Order to introduce 'At Any Time' waiting restrictions in Russell Court, Farnworth, Widnes. The original proposals are set out in Appendix '2' and the area affected is shown on Appendix '3'.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Board supports the proposal to make an Order to implement 'At Any Time' waiting restrictions on Russell Court, Farnworth as listed in Appendix '2' and that the report be submitted for resolution by the Executive Board.**

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 On 15th June 2011 the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board (E&UR PPB) considered a report on a petition from residents of Russell Court, Widnes relating to long-standing car parking problems in the area. A number of meetings had been held between Council Officers, Halton Housing Trust (HHT), Ward Councillors and residents to discuss the feasibility of various ways forward and one option, the provision of parking spaces on an area of land used as a "drying area" was to be taken to general consultation. The Board resolved: That
- (1) Council Officers, in conjunction with HHT continue their efforts to resolve the reported parking problems in Russell Court through the development of new parking provision and the control of inappropriate parking; and
 - (2) The residents of Russell Court be consulted on any proposals developed to resolve the parking problems.
- 3.2 In a subsequent consultation exercise with residents of Russell Court, the provision of 4 additional parking spaces on the 'drying area' (opposite the row of garages which are accessed off the private street) was proposed as shown on the attached drawing titled "Proposed Parking Improvements". This proposal was not generally accepted due to the loss of amenity and comments from the residents that the disabled parking bays should be near the houses. There were 19 responses to the consultation, but not every question was answered and the summary is as follows:

Question	Response	
How many Cars do you have?	None (10)	One (9)
Are you registered disabled?	Yes (10)	No (6)
Do you hold a disability blue badge?	Yes (6)	No (10)
Do you have any other person (s) that do not live at your house?	Yes (4)	No (15)
Do the overnight visitors require parking?	Yes (3)	No (14)

There were also some general comments about the difficulties being experienced. In view of the comments HHT decided that the scheme did not represent good value for money, so the scheme was not progressed.

- 3.3 The fundamental issue is that there is no on-highway parking permitted on Farnworth Street (there are 'No Waiting at Any Time' restrictions in place throughout this length of road) and little off-street provision; the lack of any visible controls on parking in Russell Court has meant that this small cul-de-sac has become the parking place of choice for more drivers than the space available can comfortably accommodate. Officers have therefore sought to follow the above Board resolution which was to provide new parking provision and control; and at the turn of the year in response to demand from the residents and local members, using Area Forum/HHT funding, they arranged the construction of three new disabled person parking spaces at the head of Russell Court, replacing a former highway grass verge to create additional road space and two new 'private' off-street parking spaces in the gardens of other properties owned by HHT as shown on the "Proposed Parking Improvements" plan attached. In addition, 'H-bar' markings have been installed to protect adjoining accesses from obstruction and bollards have been installed in some of the highway verges to prevent 'driving on' abuse of these areas and these are shown on drawing titled 'Proposed Parking Improvements'.
- 3.4 General parking congestion has continued, creating access difficulties and leading to inter-driver/neighbour disputes. There appears to be a common misconception amongst drivers that they have a right to park on the highway, especially near their own homes, when in reality parking should only take place in locations where this will not create an obstruction and any space is available purely on a first come, first served basis. In Russell Court, because it is only 5.5 metres wide, parking can only take place on one side or the other, not on both sides simultaneously. In light of this, in June 2012 the parking restrictions shown in Appendix '3' were sent out to public consultation. The report to the Operational Director (Policy, Planning & Transportation), seeking authorisation to consult, is also appended as Appendix '2'. The proposed restrictions seek only to prevent parking where it should be avoided, in order to prevent obstruction and to maintain the unrestricted flow of traffic.
- 3.5 Officer actions have thus been in accord with the E&UR PPB resolution set out above. However, four objections to the waiting restrictions have been received. There were no objections to designation of the three disabled person parking spaces at the head of the cul-de-sac.
- 3.6 The first objection letter acknowledges Russell Court is congested at the present time and raises concerns over parking displacement into adjacent areas. The proposed restrictions would displace two vehicles from parking in Russell Court. These could start parking in other side roads, such as Farnworth Close and Windermere Street. This is an unfortunate side-effect of any waiting restrictions,

and any issues created would need to be dealt with in the future. It is accepted that there is an unresolved, general lack of on-highway parking in the area.

- 3.7 The second objection letter again recognises the congestion and parking space pressure in Russell Court, but does not acknowledge that efforts have been made over the past year and are continuing to create extra parking space and to introduce reasonable restrictions intended to keep the highway (Russell Court) passable. The residents' consultation identified an unusually high number of registered disabled (62.5%) and 'blue badge holders (37.5%) are living in Russell Court. Officer action has been to comply with the E&URPPB recommendations and there is no intention in the current waiting restriction proposals to delete safe, viable, non-obstructive parking spaces.
- 3.8 The third objector also acknowledges the congestion and parking space pressure in Russell Court and the measures that have been taken to try and alleviate the problems. Again the fears are for displacement of parking demand and particular concerns over the behaviour of neighbours and the possibility of further animosity and the parking difficulties facing visitors to Russell Court.
- 3.9 The fourth objection is concerned that there will be more pressure on available parking space if the proposed restrictions go ahead, and fears her garage entrance will be blocked routinely despite the recently installed 'H-bar' marking.
- 3.10 It is recommended that all the objections be over-ruled as they do not present any valid arguments against the twin basic justifications behind the proposed waiting restrictions, of safety and keeping the highway of Russell Court clear for the passage of traffic.

4.0 FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The total cost of implementing the waiting restriction proposals is approximately £500. This will be charged to the jointly funded (HBC Area Forum / HHT) improvement scheme.
- 4.2 There are no direct policy, social inclusion, sustainability, value for money, legal or crime and disorder implications resulting from this report.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct policy, social inclusion, sustainability, value for money, legal or crime and disorder implications resulting from this report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES.

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

There are no direct implications on the Council's 'Children and Young People in Halton' priority.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

There are no direct implications on the Council's 'Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton' priority.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

There are no direct implications on the Council's 'A Healthy Halton' priority.

6.4 A Safer Halton

The proposed waiting restrictions will serve to prevent obstruction of Russell Court. Disabled person parking spaces near disabled resident's homes reduces the chance of falls and improves the quality of life for affected residents.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

There are no direct implications on the Council's 'Halton's Urban Renewal' priority.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There is a variable and uncertain road safety risk associated with introducing these proposed waiting restrictions, the degree of risk depending on the degree to which drivers would continue to park so as to obstruct the highway without them.

7.2 Traffic displaced from parking at the locations to receive new waiting restrictions will inevitably place an extra parking demand on adjacent areas and this is largely unavoidable. The new waiting restrictions recommended in this report are being proposed to maintain access to the road and the disabled parking spaces, which are a priority due to the higher than average number of "blue badge" holders.

8.0 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY ISSUES.

8.1 There are no direct equality and diversity issues associated with this report.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 Report to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on 15th June 2011 on a petition from residents of Russell Court, Widnes