

**REPORT:** Environment & Urban Renewal  
Policy & Performance Board

**DATE:** 23 November 2011

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Policy & Resources

**SUBJECT:** Matchday Parking around The Stadium

**WARDS:** Kingsway

## **1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To report on the situation regarding parking issues around the Stobart Stadium Halton, on match days.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**It is recommended that:**

**1) the temporary increased demand for on-street parking, associated with St. Helens playing its fixtures at the stadium be noted;**

**2) the measures already taken to control parking on surrounding streets be noted;**

**3) the situation continue to be monitored, especially once the new Rugby League season commences;**

**4) options to address any persistent parking problems resulting from matches at the Stadium, including additional Traffic Regulation Orders, be explored and evaluated in order to establish their feasibility; and**

**5) proposals that are deemed to be feasible and have identified resources to fund them, are consulted on (where appropriate) in order to obtain the views of those directly affected.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Stobart Stadium Halton (initially known as Naughton Park) has been on the current site since Widnes Football Club settled on it in 1884/85. The land was leased on behalf of the rugby organisation by Widnes Cricket Club but, to coincide with the breakaway from the Rugby Football Union in 1895, Widnes FC obtained a lease for the land on which they laid out a new ground.
- 3.2 Halton Borough Council in partnership with Widnes Vikings agreed to build the new stadium on the site of Naughton Park in 1995. The stadium now provides a multi-purpose complex including a social club, conference facilities, recreational facilities and catering/function

facilities. The stadium including the North and South Stands was officially opened on 2 November 1997. The West stand was built in 1998 and the East Stand was built in 2005, making it an all seater stadium and with a total capacity of 13,350.

- 3.3 The housing estates and associated roads around the Stobart Stadium were built around 1930, when car ownership was low and hence was not designed to include off street parking within the properties. Most roads are 4.7m wide, but Clayton Crescent and Timmis Crescent are only 3.2m wide and Henderson Way and Mottershead Road are 6.8m wide (a plan will be available at the meeting indicating these locations). On most days, even when a match is not taking place there are parking problems particularly on the narrower roads due to the lack of off street parking and the increased level of car ownership. A number of residents have had dropped kerbs provided to allow them to park their vehicles off the road.
- 3.4 The current Council policy for the provision of disabled parking bays requires a minimum carriageway width of 5.5m to provide a 2.4m wide bay; for general parking of cars the bay width can be reduced to 1.8m, requiring a carriageway width of 4.9m. The remaining width is required to allow vehicles, especially large vehicles such as refuse collection vehicles, to pass the parked vehicles, but does not retain two way traffic. From the above comments it will be noted that most of the roads in the area are too narrow to permit parking bays to be marked on the carriageway without prohibiting parking on the opposite side of the road, which would exacerbate the current situation even on normal days. The current situation has existed for a number of years around the stadium, and such parking is to be expected as it is common to many stadia, as parking associated with stadium activities is generally confined to specific periods once or twice a week.
- 3.5 When the Stadium redevelopment took place, parking needs were considered and it was felt there was sufficient parking in the area for the Stadium. However parking was provided on site and there are currently 159 spaces (including 6 disabled spaces); although during matches these are reserved for disabled drivers and hospitality guests. Staff are requested to park their vehicles at Lower House Lane Depot and where possible share vehicles. Waiting restrictions and traffic circulation routes around the stadium were also reviewed as part of the redevelopment proposals and point closures were subsequently implemented at Lowerhouse Lane/Sinclair Avenue and Cameron Road/Sinclair Avenue.
- 3.6 Additional parking for visitors to the stadium is available at Caldwell Road (153 spaces) and the Municipal Building (200 spaces) and coach parking is available at Lowerhouse Lane Depot. The depot is also available for staff parking, e.g. stewards and media (TV production) staff. There are also a small number of parking spaces available at Leigh Recreation Ground, Witt Road and Lacey Street together with town centre parking. From next year it is hoped that the car park at Riverside College will be available providing an extra 150 spaces. No charge is currently made on any of these car parks for parking.

- 3.7 Since February 2011 St Helens RLFC have been playing their home matches at the Stobart Stadium as it awaits the completion of its new stadium, which is due in early 2012. This resulted in effectively two 'away' teams of Super League status and following, playing at the Stadium. The combined number of visitors has resulted in increased traffic volumes in the residential areas beyond what may have been experienced in the past, and increased the demand for on-street parking. These factors have, in turn, led to a number of complaints being received from local residents who have been experiencing a range of problems or who have expressed concerns about the ability to access the estate and its properties (see paragraph 3.10 below). These concerns have been echoed by the local Ward Members and the Local Area Forum, but the number of complaints has only increased significantly since St Helens had played here for a few weeks.
- 3.8 Most St. Helens matches were played on a Friday evening when many residents tend to want to park at or near to their homes. However, it must be noted that next season, beginning in February 2012, Widnes Vikings will be playing their home matches generally on a Sunday afternoon at 3.00 pm and it is hoped that a large number of more local supporters will either walk to the Stadium or be dropped off away from the immediate area. St. Helens will also no longer be playing here and hence there should not be two 'away' teams and the associated traffic volumes and demand for parking to cater for.
- 3.9 Prior to St Helens beginning to play at The Stadium the waiting restrictions on surrounding roads were reviewed to reduce the need to put out 'No Waiting' cones for matches and to improve road safety. It was desirable to reduce the use of 'No Waiting' cones to reduce recurring costs of putting out the cones and remove the potential for misuse of the cones (e.g. moving them to other locations or to provide a parking space or throwing them into adjacent gardens, etc.), although this can be reduced by collecting them after the match has started, but before it ends, which was the procedure used last season. As a result new restrictions were implemented as follows and as shown on the attached plan:
- No Waiting At Any Time restrictions on side road junctions with Lower House Lane
  - Milton Road amended to restrict parking on match days only on the south side (existing restriction on the North side retained, but No Waiting At Any Time restrictions added to all side road junctions)
  - Caldwell Road – No Waiting At Any Time restrictions on the east side (area used for away supporters coaches to pick up after the match)
  - Caldwell Road/Moor Lane – Loading/Unloading ban added.

It is still necessary however, to use 'No Waiting' cones on Dundalk Road to minimise the impact on parking at other times e.g. when football matches are being played on the adjacent playing fields.

- 3.10 Following complaints, which started in April 2011 from residents of the Kingsway estate about problems experienced in the vicinity of the ground due to inconsiderate parking during matches, staff from both Halton Council's Traffic Division and Cheshire Police visited the area. Cheshire Police issued fixed penalty notices where appropriate. In the longer term the Police would like to see more off street parking provided, such as within school grounds.
- 3.11 The main issues identified on both Kingsway and Stewards Avenue estates during the visits are as follows:
- Parking partly on pavements (footways) with implications for pedestrians, wheelchair users, people with pushchairs etc.
  - Parking on-street sometimes making access to people's driveways difficult or, in some cases, not possible
  - Parking on-street sometimes preventing residents from parking outside or near to their own homes (regrettably, this particular problem occurs in many estates and adjacent to many stadia)
  - Parking on-street, and potentially interfering with emergency vehicle access (particularly on the narrower roads)
  - Double parking reducing available carriageway width for through traffic giving rise to concerns again about problems for emergency vehicle access
  - Parking on double yellow lines by some blue badge holders, sometimes causing an obstruction or blocking sight lines (Blue Badge holders can legitimately park on yellow lines for up to three hours but they are expected to do so responsibly)
- 3.12 It has also been noted that staff have been parking in the adjacent streets and they have been reminded to use Lower House Lane Depot.

### **Potential Options**

- 3.13 One solution to the problems outlined above would be to introduce new Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) that would restrict parking on match days on defined roads within the vicinity of the stadium. The purpose would be to ensure that access and through routes are maintained at all times. The extent of restrictions could depend on the seriousness of the problem and the width of the road. They could apply to both sides of the road or one side only as we have done at Milton Road. The cost would be about £500 per section (for advertising, signs and carriageway markings) (i.e. each side of a road between each junction). This would cost approximately £10,000 if all roads on the Kingsway estate were treated. However, this would reduce the amount of parking available for everyone, including residents who prefer to park near their homes, and hence is likely to prove unpopular.
- 3.14 To be effective the restrictions would also need to be supported by and subsequently enforced by the police who have limited resources and are not in attendance at all matches. The Council does not have the powers to enforce parking restrictions on the highway. It is unlikely that even if resources could be found to fund specific police enforcement that it would be forthcoming on the grounds that they simply would not

have the officers available and the police feel they have higher priorities than enforcement of parking restrictions.

- 3.15 Any TROs needed either for changes to the existing or for new parking restrictions would take several months to implement due to the consultation and legal processes involved. There are also costs associated with advertising any proposals, for any signs and markings required to make the restrictions enforceable and for future maintenance. Furthermore, there is a right of objection to any TRO proposal which could, if upheld, result in a TRO not being progressed.
- 3.16 Another option would be to put out 'No Waiting' cones on all affected roads but this too has a number of problems associated with it. Resources would be needed to put out and collect the cones before and after every match, vehicles would be needed to transport the cones, storage facilities would be required, and there would in all probability be abuse/misuse of the cones which could create a nuisance and will increase costs still further. The restrictions would also apply again to residents.
- 3.17 It has to be noted that if any of the above restrictions are implemented then it is highly likely that the vehicles will be displaced to other streets within the area and similar restrictions will then need to be considered for these areas. In Liverpool and Manchester there has been a similar result around the football stadiums.
- 3.18 Complaints have also been received about supporters blocking junctions on Liverpool Road and Dundalk Road and restrictions are being investigated at these locations.
- 3.19 Due to the demand for parking and the narrowness of many of the streets around the stadium, it is common practice for vehicles to be parked either fully or partly on the footways and it is very difficult to control. This is not a practice however, that should be condoned for a number of reasons: these vehicles block the footways for pedestrians; they can reduce the visibility levels between motorists and pedestrians; they restrict visibility levels especially on junctions; they potentially damage kerbs and the footway itself (and possible statutory undertakers plant in the footways) especially where there is no dropped crossing provided; this damage can result in costs being incurred by the Council who have to rectify any serious faults and respond to possible claims; any damage can result in a degradation in the appearance of an area.
- 3.20 Some authorities, most notably in London, do permit footway parking and regulate it through a TRO. However, it is generally where parking demand is permanently heavy (throughout the working week) and where the width of footways, permit pedestrians to pass relatively unhindered. Often these footways are treated or strengthened before parking is allowed to enable vehicles to access them easily and safely, and to ensure the surfaces do not break up. These improvement works can carry significant capital costs. They also have revenue costs associated with them to cover maintenance and as they need to be formalised with a TRO.

- 3.21 The Council does not currently have a policy to permit formalised footway parking. Any such proposal would have to be considered by the Executive Board. If approved it could be requested elsewhere across the Borough. Due to the problems and costs associated with such parking, as outlined above, it would be difficult to recommend the adoption of such a policy.
- 3.22 It has been suggested that Residents Only Parking schemes be implemented on the grounds that they operate near to other stadia in the country. However, there are a number of problems associated with these schemes which were set out in a report to the Executive Board on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2009. It was concluded that they should not be introduced in the Borough.
- 3.23 At the start of last season, in order to assist with the parking demand likely to result from both St. Helens and their opposition teams playing their games at the Stadium, three local schools were invited to open up their parking areas (including playgrounds) and to make a small charge to cover any costs. Whilst one school participated and the facility was advertised to supporters, the venture did not unfortunately prove successful. Only four cars used this facility over the first two matches and the school was forced to withdraw its offer as it was not even covering its security costs. It is unlikely that this option will prove viable in the future but it is there if schools wish to participate. A bus service was also provided from St Helens to the stadium to reduce the number of cars travelling to Widnes but the use of this service reduced during the season and at the end there were less than 200 supporters using the service.
- 3.24 It is possible to consider deterring on-street parking through the use of physical measures, for example, by installing bollards in the footway, or by restricting access to the road altogether. However, these have costs associated with them, may be difficult to resource or enforce and could actually impact on residents themselves. Notwithstanding this, such measures are potentially worth exploring in order to establish their feasibility, likely costs and impacts, and potential funding sources.
- 3.25 Similarly, it is possible to review all potential open spaces in the vicinity of the stadium to explore the feasibility of converting all or part of them for parking purposes. Again, it is felt that there may be some merit in undertaking this exercise.

## Summary of Options to Control Parking

Options	Advantages	Disadvantages	Cost
Match day parking restrictions on selected roads	Would allow parking when matches are not taking place	Would affect all motorists including residents on match days	Approximately £10k for Kingsway estate. See Para 3.12
No waiting cones on selected streets within Kingsway estate	No change to current situation except on match days	Would affect all motorists including residents on match days It could be difficult to put out cones due to vehicles already parked in the area	Initial cost of 1,000 cones £5k  Putting out & collecting cones £1k per match
Parking on pavements	Provide additional legal parking	Damage to pavements No guarantee that it would be available to residents	No cost available due to surveys required to determine extent of footway strengthening required
On street physical parking restrictions (e.g. bollards, etc.)	Prevents parking in inappropriate areas	Would affect all motorists including residents at all times	No cost available due to investigations required to determine features required
Residents Only Parking			Agreed not to implement them within Halton (Report to Executive Board)
Review all potential parking areas within a reasonable distance of the Stadium	Provides additional off street parking areas away from residential areas	May not be used if it is considered by supporters to be too far from the Stadium (as was the situation with the schools last season)	Needs further investigation, but would require capital investment with ongoing revenue costs

### Potential Way Forward

3.26 It is acknowledged that parking problems can and do occur on roads surrounding the stadium. These problems have been exacerbated since St Helens started playing its games here, many of which have been televised (and hence are accompanied by TV and TV staff vehicles) and all of which have two sets of 'away' supporters. Whilst most of the TV company vehicles use the Lower House Lane depot, the overall consequent increase in demand for on-street parking from supporters especially has led to an increase in complaints from residents. Many of the streets were, quite simply, not built to

accommodate the parking demands now being placed on them and hence continuing problems can be anticipated when matches are being played.

- 3.27 It is unlikely that the most recent problems reported to the Council will be resolved with the departure of St. Helens. However, it is possible that they may be alleviated to some extent as demand for on-street parking hopefully drops.
- 3.28 It is, therefore, proposed that the parking situation in the vicinity of the Stadium continue to be monitored, especially once the new Super League season starts, in order to firmly establish where problems may be occurring. It is further proposed that potential solutions to these problems continue to be explored and evaluated to establish their feasibility. These could include Traffic Regulation Orders, traffic engineering measures (e.g. bollards) or the provision of additional parking facilities. This work would be undertaken where necessary, with the support and involvement of the local Ward Members, the Local Area Forum and residents.
- 3.29 All potential solutions are likely to have costs associated with them and it will be necessary to determine what these are and how they could be funded. Where it appears feasible to take forward solutions for implementation, it will be necessary to consult those directly affected either through a statutory process or more informally. This is so that they become aware of any possible implications of a proposal and hence are given the opportunity to comment or contribute to the development of it.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The implementation of any of the above proposals would have development and implementation costs associated with them that would need to be met. There would also be ongoing maintenance costs to be considered. Normally, traffic regulation measures would be funded through the Traffic Management revenue budget, but this is limited and has to accommodate the needs of the Borough. It follows that any regulation proposal that were deemed acceptable and feasible would need prioritising against other competing demands/areas, if this particular funding source were the only one available. Any proposals that constituted capital works would need to be funded from sources to be identified.

#### **5.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

- 5.1 If nothing is done then the frustration of the residents will increase resulting in further complaints and possible conflicts between residents and supporters. However, it is possible that the demand for on-street parking will be less now that St. Helens no longer has its matches at the Stadium. Introducing further waiting restrictions will only serve to displace parking to adjacent areas and similar restrictions may, as a result, need to be considered for those areas.



## **6.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The are no direct policy implications.

## **7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **7.1 A Safer Halton**

The parking problems could cause problems for access to the area for larger vehicles, including those used by the emergency services.

### **7.2 Children & Young People in Halton**

There are no direct implications for this priority.

### **7.3 A Healthy Halton**

Concentrated and heavy on-street parking, especially in confined residential areas, can result in a number of problems and impact on the quality of life for residents.

### **7.4 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton.**

The Stadium is a significant employer of local people and the viability of the facility is dependent on it being an attractive and accessible venue.

### **7.5 Halton's Urban Renewal.**

The continued use of the Stadium assists with the regeneration of the Borough but the amount of on-street parking in the immediate vicinity can detract from the appearance of the residential neighbourhoods and possibly adversely affect parts of the highway network.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Traffic congestion and blocked footways or streets caused by inconsiderate parking can impact on all members of the community and particularly the more vulnerable/less physically able. Potential solutions to any of these problems will take account of the needs of all road users.

## **9.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

10.1 The following background papers under section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 are relevant:

Residents-Only Parking Schemes Executive Board 24 September 2009