

REPORT TO: Environment & Urban Renewal
Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 13 November 2019

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community
and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Transportation

SUBJECT: Vehicle Access Crossings Policy

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide clear guidance on the acceptable criteria for a vehicle crossings and suggest amendments to the current policy. The reason for the additional information is the requirement to protect green highway verges, control crossing widths, consider people with reduced mobility, provide sustainable drainage, and protect the visual amenity of the street scene.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) The Board reviews the criteria set out in section 4.2;**
- 2) The Board endorses the policy position that access crossings should only be permitted and constructed in accordance with these criteria; and**
- 3) An amended and updated vehicle access crossings policy be submitted to Executive Board for approval.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Council's access crossing policy was adopted by the Executive Board on 4 November 2010. In allowing vehicles to cross the footway to access their property the Council seeks to ensure this does not reduce green amenity, sustainable drainage, loss of on street parking, or impede the safety of the partially sighted and wheelchair users with long lengths of dropped kerbing and steeper gradients.

3.2 A number of improvements are suggested for the assessment criteria in the existing policy, 'Proposed Policy for Vehicle Access Crossings over footways and verges 2010'.

- 3.3 Only those access crossings which comply with the requirements set out in section 4.2 should be permitted. It is intended to produce a guidance leaflet for public information and this is attached in Appendix 1.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Proposed Criteria

Decisions on the acceptability of access crossing points (whether by application or following complaints / enforcement) are based on the assessment of a number of factors.

- 4.2 It is proposed that the following criteria are used to assess the highway safety and protection of the highway asset of any access proposed:

1. Dimensions of parking area:

A large car must be able to fit within the curtilage of the property without overhanging public areas (to avoid causing hazard to pedestrians or cyclists, or obstruct access to buried services. At least 4.8m length between the back of the pavement or property boundary (the face of any wall, fence or hedge for example) and the front of applicants building and 2.4m minimum width; or at least 6m length where parking area is in front of a garage or door where adequate means of escape needs to be provided, like a front or back door, escape window etc. The maximum allowable width of a single vehicle access crossing is 6.4m (2 transition kerbs and 5 dropped kerbs).

2. Visibility:

There must be sufficient visibility when exiting and entering the driveway in accordance with appropriate highway standards. These take the form of visibility splays and stopping sight distances, which vary depending on type and speed limit of road.

3. Minimum distances:

The vehicle access crossing should usually be situated a minimum of 1.8m from the end of any curve radius leading into or out of a junction, whilst still complying with visibility criteria. However, there may be exceptions on lightly trafficked estate roads, providing that road safety is not compromised;

4. On-road parking:

Where parallel parking against the kerb is in practice on a road, this should not preclude an access crossing, and an appropriate number of marked bays may need to be removed. It may also be necessary to install an 'H bar' marking to deter obstruction of the access where there are no marked bays or loading restrictions. However, perpendicular parking bays are usually privately owned, and access crossings behind these will generally not be permitted, except where a single landowner is involved.

5. Grassed verges:
Requests to cross large expanses of grass amenity areas will be refused. This is due to the negative impact on the street scene, the impact on highway drainage and the potential to introduce an unsafe environment for children that may use the area for recreation.

6. Highway Safety:
Any application for the construction of a vehicle access crossing may be refused on the grounds of highway and pedestrian safety. Situations where manoeuvring onto or off the highway may be hazardous include (list not exhaustive):
 - a. Onto a section of road where traffic speeds are high;
 - b. On the approach to traffic signal junctions where regular queuing takes place;
 - c. Onto a roundabout;
 - d. Within the zig-zag markings of pedestrian crossings;
 - e. Immediately adjacent to pedestrian refuges, traffic islands which would prevent a vehicle turning in excess of 90 degrees in a single manoeuvre;
 - f. At bus stops where use of a crossing could conflict with passengers waiting or make it difficult for disabled passengers to board or alight a bus
 - g. In the immediate vicinity of a junction.

7. Planning Permission
In some cases planning permission is required to create access crossings. The main criteria to be taken into consideration when assessing whether planning permission is required for an access crossing are as follows:
 - Planning permission is required to create an opening onto a highway that is a classified road (i.e. a road which has a number in the national road system, starting M, A, B or C). The type and speed limit of certain roads (together with the highway safety criteria above) may mean that they are unsuitable for a private access crossing.
 - If the area of the new hard surface within the property exceeds 5m² , then planning permission will be required where the new hard surface is not porous or does not drain to a soakaway within the property boundary.
 - Note that other factors are taken into consideration when assessing a planning application for an access crossing on a classified road, for example visual amenity as well as highway safety.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The construction of vehicle crossings over the highway are paid either in full or by direct debit payment by the applicant to the Council.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

The policy results in a clear process for providing vehicle access crossings, creating a safer environment for all, including children and young people.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

There are no direct impacts, but improvements and protection of the footway and cycleway networks are likely to encourage walking and cycling, which has positive benefits for accessing employment and education.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

There are no direct impacts, but improvements in the quality of the footway and cycleway networks are likely to encourage walking and cycling, which has positive benefits for health.

6.4 A Safer Halton

The policy ensures the needs of pedestrians, the less able, partially sighted people, and those with prams etc are taken into account. For example:

- Keeping kerb height differentials for the partially sighted and young children.
- Ensuring the crossfall of footways is not too steep and uneven for wheelchair, people with reduced mobility and motorised chair users.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The policy provides a clearer approach to constructing new crossings, protecting visual amenity by removing damaged footways and the 'trend' towards over wide access crossings for single households which result in poor footways for pedestrians, and loss of on street parking and neighbour disputes. It will assist in keeping the street scene and protection of the highway asset. It will also ensure that surface water drainage within new urban development is dealt with in a sustainable manner. The criteria to protect excessive loss of green amenity verge protects both the environment and street scene.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

There is an existing financial risk to the Council as many customers pay by instalments which may prevent the Council receiving full payment. However payments are low and most applicants work with the Council to complete payment.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

There are no direct implications but improvements in the quality of the footway network and overall impact on the general public needs to be factored into the decision to approve a crossing. The criteria laid out for vehicle crossings in this report will benefit the elderly, people with reduced mobility , small children, those with prams, wheelchairs etc.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None.