

# Parking and Traffic Flow

A report by Hassocks Parish Council Parking Working Group

## Introduction

Hassocks has many attributes which make it a wonderful place to live – it is located close to the South Downs National Park, it has a rural atmosphere yet enjoys the benefits of being a social, educational and shopping hub for the surrounding area. And with its own rail station it enjoys fast frequent services to London, Gatwick and Brighton. Its modest size means that Hassocks has largely avoided the traffic and parking issues suffered by nearby towns and its shops and residents benefit from free parking both on-street and in the village car parks.

Over the last five years there have been a growing number of requests for increased parking restrictions particularly in the roads close to the station and main shopping area. This is due to increasing on-street parking in these roads which makes life difficult for residents and their visitors as well as delivery and service vehicles. On occasion police have had to remove inconsiderately parked cars which have obstructed refuse and emergency vehicles.

Hassocks Parish Council set up a Parking Working Group in 2012 to examine the issues and recommend a course of action that reflects the rural nature of the village and benefits both residents and businesses. Initial work revealed that the issues were more complex than originally thought and that the standard available options might not be suitable for Hassocks. To get a clearer picture a Parking Survey was conducted in March 2013.

This report reviews the feedback from residents and businesses – both from the surveys and from individual feedback that members of the Group have had in their roles as Parish, District and County councillors, together with advice and support from professional staff at Mid Sussex and West Sussex Councils.

## Overview of General Issues

Car Ownership -Over the last ten years car ownership in Mid Sussex has increased by 17% to 581 cars per 1000 people which has resulted in increased numbers of households with two or more cars. (Ref 3)

Increase in Young families - Availability of good schools from Primary to Secondary (Yr11) makes Hassocks attractive to young families as the 19% increase in Primary school numbers over 5 years confirms (Appendix 6). Young families generally have 1 or 2 cars per dwelling compared to the 0 or 1 car per dwelling of older residents they replace.

Railway Station – The station at Hassocks serves a wide area including Ditchling, Clayton, Hurstpierpoint, Henfield and Fulking. The good services to both London and Brighton mean that people also travel from nearby towns – particularly the city of Brighton and Hove where parking near the main stations is either restricted or expensive. The good service to Gatwick also encourages long term parking by holiday makers.

Narrow Roads – Many roads in Hassocks are narrow ( $\approx$  5metres) which limits parking to one side or the other. Staggered and /or heavy parking then makes it difficult for on-coming cars to pass. Large delivery vehicles also find it difficult to use these roads particularly when there are bends or overhanging trees.

Shared Driveways – A large number of properties in certain roads have shared driveways, which prevents any additional cars being parked off-road.

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## Related Issues

Train Service - The quality of train services at Hassocks is directly related to passenger numbers and reflects the current high level of passenger journeys (Appendix 8). Any significant reduction in passenger numbers resulting from parking restrictions without provision of additional car park space would affect future services.

Shopping in Hassocks – The village atmosphere, with free parking and a good range of businesses makes Hassocks popular with both local people and visitors from Brighton and Hove as well as passing day trippers. Many visitors arrive by car and some have commented that they come because of the whole package – shopping, lunch and hassle-free parking.

Parking as Traffic Calming – Parking on through routes and busy minor roads reduces traffic speeds, making those roads feel safer for pedestrians and cyclists.

Displacement – Experience in Brighton and Hove shows that any significant restriction of on-street parking in an area displaces parking to adjacent roads. In fact Hassocks is already affected by displacement from Brighton residents, a few of whom park long-term in Hassocks. An Argus letter (April 2012) advised people to use Hassocks in preference to the Brighton Park and Ride scheme. Any significant restrictions for the worst affected roads would need to be offset by additional Car Park provision at an attractive price and a level of further restrictions in adjacent roads to prevent unacceptable displacement.

## Previous Surveys

In March 2010 residents in roads adjacent to the west side to the station responded to a survey (ref 1), this indicated that parking by commuters and to some extent by holiday makers was a significant issue. However responses indicated that most issues were down to inconsiderate and obstructive parking and that whilst the favoured solution was ‘timed parking’, residents still needed to be able to park without restriction. One solution that was adopted was the painting of white lines to indicate driveways which appears to have been beneficial to most residents. Another was in Semley Road where signs were erected telling motorists to park on one side of the road only; this together with the white lines across driveways greatly improved parking behaviour and is generally perceived as successful.

In November 2011 the Hassocks Amenity Association conducted a survey covering the Dale Avenue Long Term Car Park, the station Car Parks and roads on both sides of the station (Appendix 4). This indicated that:

1. 25% of cars parked in the Dale Avenue Car Park exceeded the 23 hour limit which may indicate use by residents who find it hard to find On-street parking.
2. The Station Car Parks were fully utilised with just a few spare spaces – since the survey residents’ perceptions are that these car parks are full to capacity during the week.
3. A daily average of 107 all-day parkers on the east side of the station (half of which use Woodland Road) and 66 all-day parkers on the west side of the station. Additional Car Park space would need to be provided for these vehicles if restrictions were introduced in order to avoid displacement.

## The Parking Survey

Parking Surveys covering the main village area of Hassocks were conducted in January 2013 for Businesses and during March 2013 for Residents (see Appendix 1 & 2 for analysis and Appendix 3 for Survey Questionnaires). The response was good with over 770 residents and 70 businesses replying, plus a significant number of letters and detailed comments. Replies came from every part of the village although as one would expect the level of response was higher in those roads with significant parking issues.

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## a) Issues

The main issue identified by the Business Survey was **lack of short-term parking**, with **long-term parking for staff and customers** also being an important consideration, whilst the Residents Survey identified three main issues –

1. **Lack of short-term parking,**
2. **Lack of space at Station car park**
3. **Traffic flow**

- **Lack of short term parking.** This issue affects residents the most and indicates a need to increase short term parking where-ever possible. However it is important to ensure that any action does not discourage people coming into the village to shop and also considers the parking needs of employees at local shops and businesses.

**Off Road Parking** -The creation of a new car park would solve the problem, but requires space and financing. Possible options include:

- Increasing the size of *Orion Car Park* through the acquisition of additional land by MSDC.
- Repainting the *Orion Car Park* to increase the number of spaces.
- Contacting Affinity Sutton regarding the garages near the Pauline Thaw Centre – these appear to be increasingly disused and could be demolished to provide more parking.
- A multi-storey car park on the Dale Avenue car park site.
- Orion Car Park to be reduced to 2 hour parking.
- Change the *Dale Avenue Long Stay Car Park* by making half of the spaces medium term (4 hour) parking. Consideration to be given to Parklands Road residents and local staff parking. MSDC have carried out a great deal of research into the effects and implications of different parking allowances and changing parking - they will be a valuable source of information.
- Provision of a disabled bay in the long term car park.

**On Road Parking** – Retain short term 1 hour parking on Keymer Road plus provide additional short term parking in roads close to shops (e.g. south end of Woodland Road and Chancellors Park and north end of Downs View Road).

- **Long Term Parking for Staff and Customers.** Hassocks businesses have many staff members that come from outside the village and need to park long term. Some use the *Dale Avenue Long Term Car Park* which frequently fills up early in the day, whilst others park in nearby streets. Certain businesses such as hairdressers have customers who stay over 2 hours and need longer term parking. Also some visitors want to shop and lunch and it is important not to alienate them. Possible options include:
  - Provide additional car park space for permit holders who work in Hassocks.
  - Create a 4 hour section in *Dale Ave Car Park*.
- **Lack of space at the station car park.** The HAA survey shows the *Station Car Parks* to be at or close to capacity, and the evidence of on-street parking close to the station indicates the need for significant extra capacity at the station. Possible options include:
  - Both station car parks be modified and/or repainted to increase spaces.
  - The station goods yard has space for an additional car park (≈ 120+ spaces) and could be linked directly to the London-bound platform.
  - Both Mid Sussex District Council and Meteor (the railway car park operator) have the resources and experience to run a paid car park.
  - A private operator might be attracted to run a new car park.
  - Provision of highly visible car sharing spaces would encourage this mode of transport and possibly reduce demand for parking.

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- **Traffic Flow.** This was a significant issue and additional comments specifically identified the stretch of road between McColls and National Tyres forecourt as an area of concern. Various comments and references were made to the on-street parking here, coupled with the Grand Ave / Keymer Road Junction, which is also highlighted as an accident cluster spot (Ref 4). Problems currently being cited were previously predicted but dismissed, due to a WSCC desktop survey which showed most traffic turned left out of Grand Avenue. This does not appear to be the case and a mini-roundabout might be a solution, although some loss of on street parking along Keymer Road may occur. Heavy parking in Keymer Road adjacent to Adastra Park during public events also severely restricted traffic flow on occasion. Several minor roads experiencing traffic flow problems were also identified. Possible options include:
  - Redesign Keymer Road / Grand Avenue junction to improve traffic flow yet manage speeds.
  - Reducing pavement width along the parade between Pavilion Electrics and Shafers to enable on-street parking to be maintained whilst widening the road way to allow two narrow lanes, so that traffic is able to flow easily at peak times.
  - Reviewing the limited parking bay in Grand Avenue to allow vehicles to pass easily.
  - Widening the southern section of Grand Avenue to allow two narrow lanes and parking.
  - Reviewing parking arrangements adjacent to Adastra Park.
  - Create passing places on heavily used minor roads (e.g. Downs View Road, Stanford Avenue) as well as less heavily used narrow roads (e.g. Clayton Avenue, Semley Road).

Whilst there was a good response from across the village, certain roads had particularly high response rates which reflected issues specific to those roads. In addition letters and detailed comments were received from residents in these roads which will need further review.

## High Response Roads

- **Woodsland Road** – this was the highest response road and has a number of issues, including residents with limited or no off-road parking, heavy use by commuters, shoppers and long term parkers as well as driveway obstruction.
- **North Court** – narrow and curved road with restricted sight lines and heavy commuter parking. Access difficult for delivery vehicles.
- **Stonepound Road** – parking opposite narrow shared driveway entrances, lack of passing places and its use as a ‘rat run’ during the evening peak.
- **Grand Avenue** – mainly due to the on street parking at the village end of the road.
- **Downs View Road/Clayton Avenue** – affected by excessive parking and narrowness of roads causing congestion and damage to verges due to the lack of passing places. Access difficult for delivery vehicles in both roads.
- **Dale Avenue** – cars parking opposite the school bus bay which blocks traffic. General safety issues linked to school pick up and drop off.
- **Parklands Road** – few residents in this road have off-road parking so demand for on-road spaces is high.
- **Chancellors Park** – heavy and inconsiderate parking in a narrow road combined with trees close to the road make this difficult for delivery vehicles. Significant traffic flow at school drop off and pick up times. All day parking near school leaves few spaces for parents during school pick up and drop off.
- **Stanford Avenue/Semley Road** – heavy parking combined with lack of passing places. Bends make visibility for passing traffic an issue.

Possible solutions, which might also be used in other roads, could include:

- Passing places where roads curve/bend to aid traffic flow plus some restrictions to reduce long term parking.
- Restrictions opposite bus bays plus possible use of a walking school bus from a central drop off point for Dale Avenue and Chancellors Park.

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- Suggested one-way traffic and alternating parking on one side to ease congestion but keep speed down for Chancellors Park, plus short term parking restrictions next to the school to free up space for shoppers and parents.
- In Parklands Road - additional parking spaces near the flats could be provided by converting verge space to allow head-in parking. Reviewing existing restrictions on the northern section combined with one-way traffic would potentially allow more on-street parking.
- One-Way or access restrictions to prevent 'rat-running' as in Stonepound Road.

## b) Options

Whilst both surveys sought responses on restrictions, the business survey also asked about enforcement.

- **Popularity of restrictions.** Restrictions to improve traffic flow or prevent parking at narrow points were popular overall, whilst short term parking bays followed by four hour bays were clearly popular with businesses. Residents close to the station strongly favoured the single-hour restriction with many comments requesting that residents should have some form of exemption. The level of response to the various options indicated that some increased restrictions were acceptable. Also the overall response made it clear that the further away from the station the less acceptable restrictions became.
- **Residents Bays** – Woodland Rd and Parklands Rd are the only roads that might truly justify this option due to the number of houses without driveways.
- **Enforcement.** In the residents survey a significant number of comments referred to the poor level of enforcement of the existing restrictions, and in the business survey a number of respondents identified lack of enforcement as reducing the number of short term parking spaces available for customers. Businesses favoured enforcement between one and four days a week with the average coming out at 2.4 days of enforcement a week which would equate to 0.4 of a warden working a six day week. Businesses also favoured wardens being highly visible but only acting on the most serious infringements such as long over-stayers and yellow line parkers.
- **A Hassocks Warden.** The employment of a traffic warden by the Parish Council is a consideration, possibly shared with Hurstpierpoint. The aim to be education and to improve traffic flow – this would also allow inconsiderate parking to be tackled. Any warden would need to be employed through MSDC due to training and the difficulties of the job which can result in a high turnover.
- **Controlled Parking Zones** - Where an issue such as heavy on-street parking affects an area, the standard approach is to implement a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) so that the restrictions are the same from road to road and there is reduced risk of confusion amongst drivers. There are a number of drawbacks to this approach:
  - Restrictions are zone based, not based on the needs of a particular road.
  - Advice from MSDC is that in other towns and villages Controlled Parking Zones have not been well received. It is an expensive process particularly if unwanted. When consultation has taken place elsewhere, residents who were initially supportive have then taken the decision against any CPZ.
  - WSCC take a customer focussed role toward introduction of Controlled Parking Zones which could lead the Parish to hand the whole exercise over to WSCC to conduct. However Hassocks has a history of fairly relaxed parking controls and a significant number of residents are in favour of retaining this approach even in the face of increased parking issues.

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## Private Roads

Some roads in Hassocks are privately maintained, and it is now standard for new developments to have private roads as in the case of Clayton Mills. Whilst any parking schemes will not include private roads, the residents do have a number of options open to them. The owner of the road will need to seek appropriate legal advice if they intend to take action against people who have no right to use the road, but the easiest approach is:

- Erecting signs making it clear that a road is private.

## Transport Alternatives

**Walking** – Provided it is not raining many villagers enjoy walking into Hassocks, and the availability of tarmac paths linking parts of the village together encourages walking. Also many older children walk to school which reduces car trips by their parents. However one area where walking could be encouraged is in the form of a Walking-Bus for younger children to the Infants and Windmills schools.

**Cycling** – The crucial factor in bicycle use is being able to park it securely so it will still be there when one returns. The cycle parking facility at the station is heavily used and there are proposals for a new cycle hub at the station. This will provide an alternative to car use for some rail travellers who live in Hassocks and the adjacent villages. Cycle parking stands for shoppers exist outside Budgens and the HSBC bank with a third planned for the 22-24 Keymer Road site. Additional stands (upright and wall mounted) are available through WSCC.

**Bus Services** – Hassocks is served by a number of bus services including

- 40 and 40X - a half hourly service between Brighton and Haywards Heath along the London Road
- 270 – an hourly service from Brighton to East Grinstead via Burgess Hill along the London Road
- 271 and 273 – an hourly service from Brighton to Crawley via Stonepound Xroads
- 33 – an hourly service Between Burgess Hill and Brighton running through the village
- 824 – an infrequent service serving Burgess Hill and villages towards Lewes
- Hurst and Hassocks Community Bus – a variety of local routes during the daytime.

The railway and 40 / 40X bus services run north-south serving Brighton, Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath and both have good timetables starting early and running till late into the day. The 40 / 40X service offers free travel to those with Hospital appointments in either Brighton or Haywards Heath as well as being popular with older passengers who have free bus passes during off peak times.

The east-west routes which could connect villages such as Hurstpierpoint and Ditchling with the relatively frequent railway and 40/40X services suffer from a low frequency of service and lack of direct routes. This results in the vast majority of journeys from the nearby villages being made by car.

One option which might reduce car use would be a frequent east west bus service linking Ditchling with Hurstpierpoint / Albourne and connecting with Rail and bus services at Hassocks. This service would need to start early in the day and be frequent and reliable.

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## Recommendations

In making its recommendations the Parking Working Group took into account the following aspects:

- a) Avoiding displacement of parking problems from one part of the village to another.
- b) Any changes should keep any inconvenience or cost to local residents to a minimum.
- c) That Controlled Parking Zones in other areas have not proved popular with local residents.
- d) A number of roads, mainly those close to the station and shops, have significant parking and traffic flow issues.

### Recommendation 1 – Orion Car Park

To approach MSDC asking for a review of the car parking arrangements, specifically

- Increasing the size of Orion Car Park through the acquisition of additional land by MSDC.
- Repainting the Orion Car Park to increase the number of spaces.
- Reducing time allowed from 3 hours to 2 hours.

This should provide increased availability of short term off road parking.

### Recommendation 2 – Dale Avenue Car Park

To approach MSDC asking for a review of the car parking arrangements, specifically

- Split the car park into two sections, with 50% of the spaces remaining as long term parking and 50% of the spaces changing to medium term (4 hour) parking without discs.
- Provision of a single disabled bay in the long term car park.
- To investigate use of the Long Term Section and if necessary adopt a scheme that restricts use to mainly those who work or live in the village.

### Recommendation 3 – Long Term Parking

To approach MSDC and Affinity Sutton to see if the site adjacent to the Pauline Thaw centre can be converted to long term parking.

### Recommendation 4 – On Road Short Term Parking

To approach WSCC to discuss provision of additional short term parking at a number of locations that would benefit shoppers - specifically:

- south end of Woodsland Road and Chancellors Park
- north end of Downs View Road.

### Recommendation 5 – Station Car Park – short term

To approach Network Rail for quick improvements to increase capacity including

- Both station car parks be modified and/or repainted to increase spaces.
- Provision of a few highly visible car sharing spaces to encourage this mode of transport.

### Recommendation 6 – Station Car Park – long term

To approach Network Rail to provide additional car parking on Network Rail land adjacent to the station to achieve a significant increase in car parking capacity at Hassocks Station.

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## **Recommendation 7 – Traffic Flow – Village Centre**

To approach WSCC to request a significant improvement to the Grand Avenue / Keymer Road junction, with special consideration of:

- Provision of a mini roundabout with junction redesign to reduce congestion at peak periods and traffic speed at quieter times.
- Retain on-street parking between Pavilion Electrics and Shafers by adjusting pavement width to improve traffic flow at peak times.
- Either reviewing the limited parking bay in Grand Avenue to allow vehicles to pass easily or widening the southern section of Grand Avenue to allow two narrow lanes and parking.

## **Recommendation 8 – Traffic Flow – Residential Roads**

Busy minor roads linking main roads to other residential roads require passing places to improve traffic flow. The Parking Working Group (PWG) has identified a number of roads but needs to do further work to identify the best location for a passing place. PWG to consult with WSCC and submit a separate report to council.

## **Recommendation 9 – High Response Roads**

WSCC be asked to liaise with the Parking Working Group to review the issues of these roads and to draw up an action plan, with specific recommendations for the council (HPC) to agree before a formal request to WSCC.

## **Recommendation 10 – Hassocks Warden**

MSDC and Hurstpierpoint be consulted on the costs and benefits of having a dedicated warden for the villages and for the Parish Councils to specify the level of enforcement required.

## **Recommendation 11 – Bus Services**

A separate consultation exercise be undertaken involving adjacent Parishes, SDNP, WSCC and ESCC to see if a regular east-west bus route is feasible.

## **Appendices**

1. Business Survey Analysis
2. Residents Parking Survey Analysis
3. Copy of Survey forms - Business and Residents
4. Road and Car Park Survey - Hassocks Amenity Assoc.
5. List of Private Roads
6. School Numbers
7. Parking Working Group Membership
8. Station Usage Statistics – Office of Rail Regulator

## **References**

1. Parking Survey March 2010 for roads on west side of Station
2. Minutes of HPC Parking Working Group
3. WSCC Census Bulletin No 10
4. WSCC Accident Data