

Update on Dropped Kerb Scheme / Domestic Vehicle Crossovers

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REASON FOR ITEM

At the request of the Chairman, this item provides information on the Dropped Kerb Scheme and includes the Council's policy for dealing with obstructions to the installation of vehicle crossovers.

OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE

- To note the update on the scheme and the accompanying policy document.

INFORMATION

Background

Vehicle Crossovers are areas of the footway where the kerbs have been lowered and the footway surface strengthened to allow for vehicle access to and from a property.

The installation of a properly constructed vehicle crossover is essential in order that vehicles do not cause damage to the footway and the utility services such as gas, water and electrical apparatus that lay beneath most footways.

The installation of vehicle crossovers is governed by Section 184 of the Highways Act 1980. The main purposes of the Act are:-

1. It allows the owner/occupier of premises to apply to the Council to have a vehicle crossover installed to access premises. The Act is explicit in that the installation will be at the house owner/occupiers expense.
2. It allows the Council to install a vehicle crossover where the owner of a premises habitually takes a motor vehicle across a footway or verge to gain access to those premises.
3. It allows the Council to place restrictions on the owner /occupier of premises in respect of taking a vehicle across the footway.

The Council can refuse to grant permission for the installation on grounds of danger.

Policy

The Borough has one of the highest ownership of motor vehicles and the demand for vehicle crossovers is quite high with around 50 applications being assessed each month.

With such a demand there are many obstacles that could prevent a crossover being installed such as trees, lamp columns and parking bays. In the past these problems have been dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis which was not ideal. To ensure that the Council had an agreed standard across the Borough a Vehicle Crossover Policy which laid out the way in which obstructions were dealt with was introduced. The Policy not only clearly lays out procedures to follow but also tries, where possible, to maintain the street scene environment. The Policy is included below for reference.

Applications

Residents of the Borough can either apply online or by paper application. Each application is assessed by the highways section once a site visit has determined whether the installation would pose any danger and whether there are any obstructions which may prevent the installation. Should the application be feasible then a quotation is sent to the applicant together with an acceptance form and guidelines. The average cost of a standard size crossover is around £800, however, each quotation is priced according to the size and amount of materials required. If the quotation is accepted then the installation will be added to the programme which will normally see the crossover installed in around 6 weeks.

STREET SCENE MAINTENANCE POLICY FOR DEALING WITH OBSTRUCTIONS TO THE INSTALLATION OF VEHICLE CROSSOVERS

Obstruction by Highway Trees

Street trees play a valuable role in offsetting the negative effects of motor vehicles and the removal of healthy trees to facilitate off street parking spoils the avenue affect of the boroughs streets, as trees are systematically removed and replaced with concrete or tarmac. The removal of street trees should therefore only be considered in exceptional circumstances where a tree is dead, diseased or dangerous.

Where a resident applies for a vehicle crossover and a street tree obstructs the construction of the crossover or excavation work for the crossover is within the drip line of a tree's canopy then the Highways Officer will seek the advice of a Tree Officer and the following will generally apply:

If the tree is healthy and of high amenity value, then the Tree Officer will advise that the application should be refused.

If the tree is of a low amenity value, is causing some form of footway damage and/or is replaceable, then subject to consultation consideration will be given to its removal and replacement elsewhere in the street, the cost of which will be passed to the resident.

If the tree is dead, dying, dangerous or causing extensive footway damage, then the Council will cover the cost of removing the tree and a replacement tree planted, if appropriate, by the Council.

If it is acceptable to remove the tree, the crossover application can then be approved subject to payment of the Council's costs.

Installation through a large Grassed area of highway

Grassed areas adjoining the highway play an important role within the street scene environment of the borough and the removal of a these areas to facilitate off street parking spoils the visual affect of the boroughs streets, as areas are systematically removed and replaced with concrete or tarmac.

The damage to large grassed areas created by the construction of vehicle crossovers will only be considered in exceptional circumstances or where an established pattern of such vehicle crossovers has already been set within the street.

Where an application is received that will adversely damage a large grassed area then the Highways Officer will seek the advice of the Highways Inspection Manager and the following will generally apply:-

Where the area affected is a large area and is adopted public highway then unless there are exceptional circumstances or an established pattern of such vehicle crossovers has already been set in the street then the application will be refused.

Where the area is a large area and not adopted public highway but housing land the Highways Officer will seek the advice/approval of the Housing Officer for the area. (Following agreement with the Head of Estates Management applications will not be approved unless there are exceptional circumstances or an established pattern of such vehicle crossovers has already been set within the street).

Obstruction by Lamp column

Where columns are provided in a street for street lighting purposes regulations stipulate the distances they are required to be sited at.

When a column obstructs the construction of a vehicle crossover or construction of a crossover would come within 0.6 metres of an unprotected column then the Highways Officer will seek the advice of a Street Lighting Engineer and the following will generally apply:-

If the column can be re sited within the regulated set distances and there is available space then subject to consultation consideration will be given to its removal and replacement elsewhere in the street, the cost of which will be passed to the resident.

If the column cannot be re sighted then the application will be refused.

Obstruction by Street furniture

Where other street furniture obstructs the construction of a vehicle crossover then the Highways Officer will seek the advice of the Highways Inspection Manager. If the furniture can be re sighted to accommodate the crossover and still provide the necessary service function then consideration will be given to its removal and replacement elsewhere in the street, the cost of which will be met by the resident.

Parking bays

Parking bays within parking schemes are implemented under a Traffic Management Order (TMO). Any amendment to remove or reduce a parking bay requires changes to the original TMO. Such amendments require consultation and publication of the proposal as well as advertising the making of the Order.

Where the location of a vehicle crossover is affected by a parking bay then the Highways Officer will refer the matter to the Traffic, Parking & Road Safety Manager for consideration whose decision in the matter is final.

The cost of any consultation and publication will be met by the crossover applicant.

In the first stage only the consultation fee and initial advertising costs as appropriate will be required to be paid prior to the commencement of consultation. The fee covers the council's costs in carrying out the statutory consultation and advertising the proposal and will be non refundable irrespective of the outcome. Payment of this fee does not guarantee that a TMO will be made. In deciding whether to make a TMO the Council is bound to have due regard to all consultation responses and the Council's statutory duty to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic.

Assuming that the results of the consultation responses are acceptable and the proposal will not adversely affect the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic the remaining fee covering the cost to advertise and amend the Order and cost of removal and relocation of the parking bay sign or lines will then need to be paid by the applicant prior to the advert being published.

To reduce costs associated with amending a TMO, the resident may agree to wait for the Council to advertise several changes of TMO's so the cost can then be shared amongst those residents concerned.

Once an amendment to the TMO has been made the application for the crossover can then be approved and installation can be programmed.

It is a statutory requirement that if a proposed Traffic Management Order is to be made permanent then it must be done within two years of the proposal being advertised.

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