

12th July 2011

Name of Cabinet Member:
Cabinet Member (City Services) - Councillor Harvard

Director Approving Submission of the report:
Director of City Services and Development

Ward(s) affected:
All

Title:
Revisions to Verge Parking Policy

Is this a key decision?
No

Executive Summary:

Parking on grass verges is an ongoing issue throughout the city. It causes conflict between those residents who wish to park on verges and those who would like to see verges protected in order to care for and enhance the appearance of the city. Uncontrolled verge parking reduces verges to an unsightly state, presents a hazard to pedestrians and other road users, makes it difficult to maintain and cause damage to street trees.

Where these issues occur on main arterial roads into and out of the city the added issues around reputation and appearance becomes more significant, never more so than in 2012 when Coventry will be on the world stage.

To help overcome these competing demands, it is proposed to retain the central part of the current verge parking policy, based on a three-tier approach using the road hierarchy as a guide to offer different options including enforcement, provision of enhanced parking facilities and toleration of existing practices balanced against the different priorities. However the principal policy changes proposed are:

- The use of a number of additional considerations which need to be taken into account when looking to introduce the available options;
- A more sympathetic approach to residents who have no other means of parking;
- Giving greater clarity as to when the three main options should be applied;
- Setting out criteria that will be applied to assess and prioritise requests.

Importantly, the new policy will make clear in which circumstances to apply the different options. It will also make better use of resources and will strike the right balance between the competing demands and priorities.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member (City Services) is recommended to:

- (i) Adopt the revised Verge Parking Policy approach as set out in Appendix A;
- (ii) Adopt the Verge Parking Option Assessment Criteria as set out in Appendix B.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix A: Verge Parking Policy approach

Appendix B: Verge Parking Option Assessment Criteria

Other useful background papers:

Report to Cabinet Member (City Services) 11th June 2009: 'Report of Scrutiny Board 3 – Verge Maintenance Review Group'.

Has it or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it, or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 Parking on grass verges is an ongoing issue throughout the city as levels of car ownership have increased, creating greater demands and competition for available parking space. Where uncontrolled, verge parking can reduce the verge to an unsightly state, presenting a hazard to pedestrians through deep rutting, making it difficult and more expensive to maintain and causing damage to trees and their roots. Verge parking can also cause a hazard to other motorists, especially if the vehicle is parked on a bend, narrow road or at a junction.
- 1.2 Where roadside frontages include a grass verge there is often a conflict between the desires of some residents who wish to park on the verge and those who value the amenity of green spaces along the road side. Where these sites occur on main arterial roads into and out of Coventry the added issues around the reputation and appearance of the city arises and the views of rutted and unsightly grass verges scarred by vehicles being driven over them becomes more significant, arguably never more so than in 2012 when Coventry will be on the world stage with the Olympics and the 50th anniversary of the consecration of Coventry Cathedral.
- 1.3 The current verge parking policy was introduced in June 2009 following recommendations from Scrutiny Board 3 and adopted a three-tier approach using the road hierarchy as a guide to offer different options and possible solutions balanced against the different priorities. The three tiers and the current options are:
- (i) Primary routes (e.g. Holyhead Road, Ansty Road, Binley Road):-
 - Primary routes are the major routes into and out of the city and by their nature are heavily used making it important they remain free-flowing to reduce congestion
 - The presumption for these routes would be that no parking on verges or footways be allowed
 - The options available being either legal enforcement through the introduction of traffic regulation orders to prohibit verge parking or physical measures such as bollards.
 - (ii) Secondary distributor routes (e.g. Sewall Highway, Blackberry Lane, Hipswell Highway):-
 - These routes move traffic around different parts of the city and carry less traffic than primary routes
 - These routes could be protected against parking as in tier 1 or parking be permitted following the introduction of enhanced parking facilities such as a hard-standing surface or lay-by.
 - (iii) Estate roads
 - Traffic flows on estate roads are generally low and cater mainly for local and access traffic
 - The presumption for these roads would be that existing patterns of verge parking would be tolerated, unless they give rise to significant safety issues or where there is a likelihood of damage to trees
 - Where a clear case of community well-being is evidenced then these roads would also be considered for action, otherwise they would be given a low priority for action.

- 1.4 Due to the ongoing issues and conflicting demands surrounding verge parking a review of the current policy has been undertaken and was carried out in light of the proposed changes to the Domestic Vehicle Footway Crossing Policy. The establishment of an effective verge parking strategy also supports the implementation of a new policy to deal with kerbside car sales.
- 1.5 Whilst this report outlines the significant impact of verge parking it also has to be borne in mind the financial implications of addressing residents concerns. Whilst the report outlines a range of strategies for the future management of verge parking, it must be recognised that there will always be a need to prioritise requests within a policy framework.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 There is a conflict between those residents who wish to park on verges and those who would like to see verges protected in order to care for and enhance the appearance of the city. To add to this situation, the Council has a number of responsibilities as highway authority, including keeping verges and the rest of the highway safe and unobstructed, particularly at road junctions where clear visibility for all road users is important, and to reduce congestion on the highway to keep traffic moving.
- 2.2 Given these conflicting demands and priorities a blanket approach to either protect or dig up verges is unsustainable, as is a case by case approach, which will lead to inconsistencies. The existing three-tier approach has been reviewed and as a policy framework it remains largely sound. It offers practical assistance in determining the steps the Council will take to resolve the competing demands of different sections of the community and using the road hierarchy as a guide enables the Council's different priorities and responsibilities in terms of the use of the road network to be balanced appropriately.
- 2.3 It is proposed that the new approach remains unchanged as far as the three categories of road and the options to be considered are concerned. The existing options and approximate basic costs can be summarised as:
- (i) Legal enforcement
 - Traffic Regulation Order to prohibit verge parking (£3,000 per scheme)
 - (ii) Physical enforcement
 - Bollards (£170 per bollard)
 - Marker posts (£50 per post)
 - Trip rails (£40 per linear metre)
 - High kerbs (£75 per linear metre)
 - (iii) Enhanced parking facilities
 - Hardstanding (£1000 per space)
 - Grasscrete (£700 per space)
 - Lay-by (£2,200 per space)
 - (iv) Take no action and tolerate existing parking practices
- 2.4 The new policy however proposes a number of additional considerations which need to be taken into account when considering or introducing the available options. These generally take a sympathetic approach to residents who have no other means of parking, for example, before introducing verge parking bans on primary routes consideration shall be given to accommodating more on-street parking in the general area where residents affected would have no adequate alternative parking arrangements. On secondary routes this goes a stage

further by proposing that legal or physical enforcement options will normally only be considered where residents have adequate alternative parking arrangements. The proposed new Verge Parking Policy approach is outlined in Appendix A.

2.5 It is also proposed within the new policy to make it clearer when the three main options will be applied and Appendix B sets out the criteria that will be applied to assess requests for action and will be used to prioritise requests against the available resources. The new assessment criteria will replace the prioritisation process introduced under the existing policy, which is considered too complex.

2.6 Overall the new policy approach and assessment criteria will make clearer in which circumstances to apply the different options available, it will make better use of resources and will strike the right balance between the competing demands and priorities.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

3.1 The recommendations and proposals in this report arise from discussions between officers representing the Council's legal and highways directorates. The respective Cabinet Members for City Services and City Development have also been consulted.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

4.1 Subject to approval it is proposed to adopt the amended policy with immediate effect. A programme of publicity will be prepared to ensure citizens are made aware of the changes in the policy.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Legal Services

5.1 Financial implications

The simple repair of minor damage to verges can be covered by existing revenue budgets as long as no repetition of the damage is foreseen. There is an annual budget of £100,000 currently allocated from the Highways Maintenance and Investment Capital Programme for the introduction of verge management measures. The options outlined in this report, up to the value of the available budget, can therefore be introduced within existing resources.

5.2 Legal implications

The basic position is that vehicles are allowed to park on a verge provided they are not causing a danger or obstruction. However, that situation is modified by Section 19 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 which prohibits heavy commercial vehicles from parking on verges and may be modified by making a Traffic Regulation Order restricting parking generally or specifically restricting parking on a verge.

The Council as a highway authority has improvement powers that would allow it to introduce physical features such as bollards, rails or raised kerbs to discourage verge parking. It also has similar powers allowing it to turn soft verges into areas of hard-standing. It has powers to make Traffic Regulation Orders restricting parking on either road safety or preserving local amenity grounds. Such Orders are subject to a statutory public consultation/objection process. Once in force, such Orders are enforced by the Council's Civil Enforcement Officers.

6. Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / LAA (or Coventry SCS)?

The proposals support the Council's key objective to promote better roads, streets and pavements.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

The main risk is that verge parking can cause a danger to pedestrians and other road users through deep rutting and where vehicles are parked on the verge at junctions or pedestrian crossing places blocking visibility. This risk is currently managed by undertaking reactive verge maintenance and through civil parking enforcement, where traffic regulation orders are currently in place.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

Parking on grass verges can seriously affect the operation of grass cutting and street cleansing. It can also lead to serious damage to the verge, which is very costly to maintain.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

An EIA has not been undertaken as this is an amendment to an existing policy.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None

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APPENDIX A – VERGE PARKING POLICY APPROACH

Table 1: Three-Tier Approach

TIER	APPROACH	OPTIONS	IMPACT	OTHER CONSIDERATIONS
1 – Primary Routes (89 kms or 10% of road network)	Presumption that no parking on verges allowed	Legal Enforcement 1. Introduce TRO to prohibit parking on verge	1. Low cost, minimal signs, no markings, low maintenance, protects appearance	Regular and robust enforcement of TRO required Use of physical enforcement options where repeated areas of abuse and normally only if legal enforcement not effective or appropriate. Where there is no adequate alternative parking arrangements, consideration given to accommodating more on-street parking in general area. Only where none exists may the provision of a lay-by be considered.
		2. Existing prohibition of waiting (double yellow lines)	2. Road markings only, no additional cost, low maintenance	
		Physical Enforcement 3. Bollards / marker posts	3. Medium cost, visual intrusion	
		4. Trip rail	4. Medium cost, visual intrusion and ongoing maintenance	
		5. High kerbs	5. High cost, visual intrusion, low maintenance	
2 – Secondary Routes (134 kms or 16% of road network)	Individual assessment on a case by case basis	Legal Enforcement 1. Introduce TRO to prohibit parking on verge	1. Low cost with minimal signs, no markings, low maintenance	Isolated parking without significant damage to verge, not prioritised. Regular parking occurs causing significant verge damage and adequate alternative parking available, presumption that verge protected and maintained (as Tier 1 above). Regular parking occurs causing significant verge damage and no adequate alternative parking available, consideration given to the provision of enhanced parking facilities.
		2. Existing prohibition of waiting (double yellow lines)	2. Road markings only, no signs, no additional cost, low maintenance	
		Physical Enforcement 3. Bollards / marker posts	3. Medium cost, visual intrusion	
		4. Trip rail	4. Medium cost, visual intrusion	
		5. High kerbs	5. High cost, visual intrusion, low maintenance	
		Enhanced Parking Facilities 6. Hard standing	6. High cost, visual intrusion, low maintenance	
		7. Grasscrete	7. High cost, less visual intrusion, low maintenance	
		8. Lay-by	8. Very high cost, low maintenance	

APPENDIX A – VERGE PARKING POLICY APPROACH

TIER	APPROACH	OPTIONS	IMPACT	OTHER CONSIDERATIONS
3 – Local / Estate Roads (632 kms or 74% of road network)	Presumption that existing parking practices to be tolerated	Existing Parking Practices 1. Parking wholly on the verge	1. Limited visual intrusion, reactive maintenance required	Existing practices only tolerated where there are no road safety or traffic management concerns, and that street trees are not being damaged. Only otherwise considered for action where a clear case of community well-being is evidenced or there are significant ongoing maintenance issues. In these circumstances, the approach produced for the second-tier should be applied.
		2. Parking partially on the verge and partially on the road	2. Limited visual intrusion, reactive maintenance required, low traffic flows / speeds	

APPENDIX B – VERGE PARKING OPTION ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

1. Legal and Physical Enforcement

One or more of the following criteria shall apply when determining the enforcement of parking on verges:

- (i) There is clear evidence that verge parking is affecting the safety of pedestrians or other road users;
- (ii) There is an adverse impact on peak period traffic congestion on classified roads;
- (iii) There is extensive physical damage to the verge making it difficult to maintain;
- (iv) Local Ward Councillors support the introduction of verge parking enforcement at any proposed location;
- (v) There is damage caused to street trees or roots;
- (vi) There is damage to services, such as cables in the verge.

In addition, the following supplementary criteria shall be applied when prioritising enforcement action:

- (vii) Enforcement will normally only be considered where there is adequate alternative parking available (either on or off-street) in the vicinity;
- (viii) It should be demonstrated that there will not be a worse problem created by displaced parking;
- (ix) The use of physical enforcement will normally only be considered if legal enforcement options are either not effective or appropriate;
- (x) Roads which are primary traffic routes will be given a higher consideration.

Enforcement options will only be considered where there is available funding and the associated criteria above will be used to prioritise locations against the resources available.

2. Enhanced Parking Facilities

The following criteria shall apply when determining the provision of enhanced verge parking facilities:

- (i) The provision of formalised parking arrangements would not affect the safety of pedestrians or other road users; and
- (ii) There are no other suitable parking alternatives, either on or off-street; and
- (iii) Regular parking occurs causing significant damage to the verge or street trees; and/or
- (iv) Local Ward Councillors support the introduction of verge parking facilities at any proposed location.

In addition, the following supplementary criteria shall be applied when prioritising enhanced verge parking facilities:

- (v) The volume and speed of traffic and/or number of pedestrians using the road would make on-street parking a hazard;
- (vi) It should be demonstrated that the provision of enhanced parking facilities will substantially resolve the current parking issues at a given location and that it will not lead to related parking problems arising in the foreseeable future;
- (vii) Roads which are secondary traffic routes will be given a higher consideration.

Options for enhancing parking facilities will only be considered where there is available funding and the associated criteria will be used to prioritise locations against the resources available.