

Submission to the Transport Select Committee by Surrey County Council

14 May 2019

The impact of pavement parking:

We know it causes problems for people to get along the footway safely, however we don't have data about number of complaints specifically or analysis of frequency/severity of problems.

Car ownership and housing density is increasing in Surrey. In many towns there is not enough parking space on streets, many of which were laid out before the car was invented. The lack of road space combined with infill development increases pressure to park on footways and verges. As a county council we spend approximately £300,000 per year managing parking restrictions and we have a countywide programme to tackle dangerous and obstructive parking but this might be done on a smaller scale if footway parking were prohibited.

Parking on footways and verges causes damage to the surface (and also potentially to utility company apparatus underneath) leading to additional maintenance costs and general degradation of the street scene / environment. This gives rise to complaints and residents often put logs/rocks/posts and other obstructions on verges to protect them.

Historically, when we have received complaints about footway or verge parking and obstruction in busy pedestrian areas we have installed bollards or other street furniture to prevent it. This can be expensive on a large scale, we estimate an annual spend of approximately £75,000 each year on this activity.

There are many residential streets with little off road parking where resident's cars are parked in almost every conceivable space on the road, footway or verge. Many residents rely on cars in areas less well served by public transport so managing this situation can be challenging, removing parking space quite often just causes displacement (usually somewhere less suitable)

It is not unusual for incidents and complaints over pavement parking to be associated with the areas near to schools at school journey times. This can impede journeys to school by those walking and scooting and can make travel by these modes less attractive and convenient. It can be especially problematical if it results in school children and parents having to walk or scoot in the road, or if the parked vehicle obscures visibility between different road users. If these problems deter more walking and scooting, and lead to more car use, then this results in more congestion, more air pollution, and is worse for the health of school children.

There is often confusion amongst the public regarding who enforces footway parking, particularly as parking in front of a dropped kerb is decriminalised under Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) but parking so to block footways is not.

Current Practice

Surrey Police have powers to tackle obstruction on the highway including the footway. They do respond to serious obstructive parking problems but their policing priorities often mean 'routine' footway parking issues do not receive attention.

Current legislation (TSRGD 2016) allows us to prohibit or allow footway parking with the introduction of a TRO. We can also introduce waiting restrictions that apply to the back of the highway (verge or footway) to achieve the same effect but this means it is not possible to park on the road either.

It is challenging to introduce a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) in an area where footway parking has been taking place for a long time. The most severe problems take place where residents have little/no off street parking, on a narrow road with high housing density. To ban parking in these circumstances is politically very challenging as parking capacity is reduced by ~50% and therefore such proposals are unpopular with the overwhelming majority of residents.

In some circumstances a permit parking scheme or CPZ may alleviate pressure by removing non resident parkers but in most cases the problems are worst in the evenings and overnight when only residents are home.

We have implemented two footway/verge parking bans in Surrey since the DfT relaxed the relevant signing regulations in 2011. Both schemes were introduced in Epsom and Ewell Borough over relatively small areas (about 6 streets each) and had to be signed at the boundaries with repeater signs at regular intervals. The combined cost of the traffic orders and signs for each scheme was about £5000 and covered a tiny percentage of the overall urban/residential area in Surrey. It would be prohibitively expensive to expand this type of restriction over large areas using the current TRO legislation and in the process greatly increase sign clutter.

Note: Local Authorities are still required to place a statutory notice in the local paper (usually twice) when promoting TRO's. We spend approximately £75,000 per year on parking restriction notices alone, despite concerted efforts to reduce this in recent years. We encourage feedback and objections to proposals via our web pages and always ask respondents how they came to find out about the planned restrictions. Generally 1% say they saw a notice in the local paper, the remainder from a letter/street notice/web or neighbour.

Surrey operates a 'parking review' process whereby we assess complaints and comments about parking issues in each borough every year. This picks up parking related safety and obstruction problems and we decide at a local level whether to introduce restrictions that may be needed. We tend to tackle persistent and dangerous footway obstruction in this process.

A 'national' blanket ban on footway and verge parking would create huge problems for many towns and villages in Surrey that are currently largely unrestricted. Many vehicles would be displaced and I expect obstruction of the highway rather than the footway would become more widespread.

Surrey County Council has a "Road Safety Outside Schools Policy" which sets out a process of how we respond to concerns over road safety near schools. This includes a site visit to assess the perceived problems and to develop highway solutions where possible. If pavement parking is an issue then options such as bollards and other parking controls can be considered, but this can be expensive and not always feasible. For the reasons described above enforcement can be problematical.

SCC recommendations to the committee

1. It doesn't seem practical/cost effective to introduce large scale pavement/verge parking bans as currently allowed by the TSRGD 2016. The cost of traffic orders and

signs would be prohibitive, particularly in locations where there may only be pavement parking by 'one or two' individuals

2. If a 'blanket ban' on pavement parking were to be introduced, our authority would come under huge pressure to introduce schemes that re-permit pavement parking (as in London) which would require a significant resource to implement and maintain at a time of severely reduced budgets, so the legislation would need to be supported by extra funding from central government.
3. It seems unlikely that pursuing such blanket schemes would be of greater benefit (from a safety perspective for example) than the schemes we're currently promoting with the resources at our disposal.
4. **From our perspective, the most effective approach would be to enable obstruction of the footway to be penalised as a civil matter under CPE, allowing us to take enforcement action against the main problems caused by pavement parking without the need for costly TROs and signage. This would also stop the police from being asked to divert resources to deal with the problem, although they could retain the powers to take action if necessary.**
5. **If councils had powers to enforce footway obstruction we could devise our own enforcement policies that might include considerations such as:**
 - **Setting a minimum width of footway that must be kept clear before obstruction was caused.**
 - **Taking into account traffic and pedestrian movement and the road hierarchy**
 - **A safety assessment of streets where footway parking was the norm to guide enforcement practice.**
 - **Publicity to inform highway users and residents and potentially issuing warnings for a first offence.**
- 6 **Contraventions of any new footway obstruction offence should be at the higher PCN level, currently £70 in Surrey.**
- 7 **Camera enforcement of footway obstruction should be permitted in areas where a prohibition by TRO is in place or elsewhere within 500m of a school during the operational hours of the school keep clear.**