

# **Community Safety Forum**

## **Station Yard Car Park group**

### **Introduction to the final report**

The Station Yard car park group was run by MVCAP at the request of the Malmesbury Area Board to look at local concerns about antisocial behaviour, criminality and antisocial driving centred on the Malmesbury Station Yard long stay car park.

Membership of the group consisted of representatives drawn from Wiltshire Council, Malmesbury Neighbourhood Policing Team, Wiltshire Fire Service, Wiltshire and Town councillors, Malmesbury & St. Paul's Without Resident's Association and residents directly affected by the problems. Meetings were organised, chaired and minuted by members of MVCAP.

The project began in July 2013 and the final report completed in January 2015. During this period a large amount of evidence as collected by the group including a topographical survey of the car park, speed monitoring on Station Road and Gloucester Road and an exercise to monitor levels of disturbance which was run through the summer and autumn of 2014.

On behalf of MVCAP I would like to record our thanks to everybody who took part in the process. In particular we would like to thank the Area Board, Wiltshire Council and Wiltshire Police for the time and resources they committed to this project and Wiltshire Fire Service for providing their meeting room free of charge.

We would also like to record our thanks to the late Martyn Snell who was so influential in raising residents' concerns and getting this project established.

### **Martin Rea**

Chair Station Yard Car Park group  
Vice-chair MVCAP  
[mvcap.org.uk](http://mvcap.org.uk)

*9<sup>th</sup> February 2015*

## Confirmations

Everybody who at any time was considered to be a member of the car park group was contacted in January 2015. They were asked the following questions. Their responses are recorded below.

- *I confirm that I have read the final version of the group's report regarding antisocial behaviour in and around the Station Yard car park.*
- *To the extent of my involvement with the group, I [do / do not] consider it to be a fair account of the group's investigation and conclusions.*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Representing</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Date</b>
Martin Rea ( <i>Chair</i> )	MVCAP	Yes + I do	23/01/2015
Simon Killane	Wiltshire Councillor	Yes + I do	25/01/2015
Martin Alvis	Police	Yes + I do	24/01/2015
Michael Tripp	Police	Yes + I do	07/02/2015
Rachel Webb	Police	Yes + I do	03/02/2015
Chris Harvey	Fire Service	<i>No reply</i>	
Martin Rose	Wiltshire Council	Yes + I do	22/01/2015
Miranda Gilmour	Wiltshire Council	Yes + I do	22/01/2015
Lyn Penfold	Town Council	<i>No reply</i>	
Kim Power	Town Council	<i>No reply</i>	
Edmund Dias	Residents Association	<i>No reply</i>	
Andrew Bisping	Resident	<i>No reply</i>	
Sara Gray	Resident	Yes + I do	24/01/2015
Jessica Johnson	Resident	Yes + I do	08/02/2015
Rob Mackie	Resident	<i>No reply</i>	
Art Robb	Resident	Yes + I do	09/02/2015

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## Station Yard Car Park group

### The problem

- **Location**

The Station Yard long stay car park in Malmesbury is near the centre of town but relatively isolated, particularly outside of working hours. It sits in a natural “bowl,” there is plenty of open space in and around the car park and a natural driving “circuit” exists which takes in the car park, Station Road, Gloucester Road, Abbey Row and Mill Lane, although access restrictions have recently been put in place on Mill Lane.

- **History**

There has been a low background level of anti-social behaviour associated with the car park for decades. Occasionally there are spikes of increased problems as detailed below.

Wiltshire Police and local councils have taken action over the years to disrupt the worst patterns through efforts such as extra police patrols, improved lighting and cutting back shrubs to improve visibility. Despite this some problems persist and residents whose properties face or back onto the car park report continuing disturbances, particularly in the summer months, some of which are reported to the police but many of which go unreported.

- **Anti-social driving**

This takes the form of speeding on Station Road and Gloucester Road, loud engine noise, and cars driving the “circuit” via Mill Lane. Additionally some cars take an alternate route using Tetbury Hill. Within the car park itself wheelspins, “doughnuts,” loud engine revving and loud music from car sound systems are reported as compounding the level of disturbance.

- **Damage to parked cars**

There have been some incidents of damage to cars parked in the car park including broken wing mirrors, scratches and, very rarely, cases of more substantial damage.

- **Anti-social behaviour**

Beyond the anti-social driving there is the more general issue of anti-social behaviour. Sometimes this is associated with the car drivers but, as this area is a secluded spot, it is attractive to many people and so is not solely linked to them.

- **Noise nuisance**

General noise from people socialising and drinking is a regular complaint. Particularly in the summer months nearby residents complain about bad language, shouting and other noise nuisance persisting into the late evening or night-time.

- **Vandalism**

In addition to the damage to vehicles there have been some other incidents

including damage to seating and tables next to the river.

- **Litter**

This is a constant issue with litter, particularly around the riverside seating area.

## **Collection of evidence**

While there is a lot of anecdotal evidence from residents and some documentary evidence from bodies such as the Police there seemed to be no clear body of evidence about the scale of the problems and the types of approaches that might be applied to address them. To tackle this we collected evidence from a variety of sources.

- **Police records and information**

The Police gave us updates about the number of reported problems as well as background information about the types of issues they encounter and the realities of policing this area. Despite the perception the Police only receive a very small number of reports about behaviour in the car park – typically 1-2 per month – and in the last year this rate has been declining. Police respond to calls about problems and have intermittent patrols taking in the area, particularly on weekends, but providing resources for a more sustained level of policing in the area is difficult due to the overall low frequency of problems.

- **Speed monitoring – Gloucester Road and Station Road**

SDR speed recording units were used to collect data to help understand the nature and scale of speeding on these roads. On both stretches, while there were isolated incidents including one reaching 59mph on Station Road, the average and 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds recorded were below the speed limit.

- **Wiltshire Council Highways Department**

We were given a lot of information about the car park and different measures that could be used to reduce opportunities for antisocial driving. The Area Board funded a detailed topographical survey as part of this process. Possible interventions included:

- **Traffic calming measures**

In the form of bolt down speed bumps in the car park and more substantial engineering such as speed reduction pillows on the highway sections.

The former are relatively cheap to introduce and, if carefully located, could reduce the attractiveness of the car park for antisocial driving without a loss of parking spaces. The latter would be very costly and would need to meet Wiltshire Council criteria relating to persistent speeding if funding were to be available.

- **High friction surfaces**

This is a replacement road surface that has no impact on vehicles being driven normally but which makes spinning wheels and sliding manoeuvres almost impossible. If implemented this could be effectively introduced in strips rather than requiring the whole car park to be resurfaced. However, this would not stop this type of driving on the grass covered surfaces bordering

the parking area so some kind of barrier to stop vehicles driving on the grass areas might be required to make this an effective approach.

- **Recycling area**

When the large recycling containers are removed a new space for antisocial driving will be opened up. Careful positioning of low cost obstacles such as large planters could be effective in blocking off this space. Some investigation about the use of this area as a turning space for large vehicles would be needed before any scheme could be implemented.

- **Shrub cover and heights**

High shrubs within and on the boundary of the car park block visibility and create a space for antisocial activities to take place. Improved management and more frequent cutting back should solve this problem.

- **Lighting**

Lighting levels are low, particularly in the areas bordering the car park. Additional lighting might make the space less attractive as a gathering area. However, lighting for this area was investigated a number of years ago and new improved lighting was installed. It may not be possible to increase lighting without having a negative impact on the area through light pollution.

- **Gates**

These have been used to address problems at other car parks by locking the entrances overnight. Alternatively, automatic barrier gates could be installed but these are relatively costly and it's unclear how this would significantly modify driver behaviour. It is unclear how either gated approach could work for this site given the 24 hour access needed.

- **CCTV**

We looked at the use of CCTV and its possible impact on the problems. There are two possible approaches to introduce CCTV monitoring in this area.

- **As part of a new Malmesbury Town Council system**

The town council are working towards replacing their existing system. Investigation into replacement systems is ongoing and there is not currently a definite date for introduction of a new system. Additional cameras could be added to cover the car park but allocation of costs would need to be agreed between the town council and Wiltshire Council – the owners of the car park.

- **Stand-alone system**

An alternative would be to locate a couple of stand-alone CCTV cameras to cover the car park and surrounding area. This would be relatively cheap to introduce but procedures for downloading and providing the data to the police would need to be established.

- **Monitoring forms**

We put together a leaflet and form for residents to record any problems they

experienced however small. A paper form and an online form were available to collect information. The leaflets were delivered by the Police to the houses facing or backing onto the car park. The survey was run from June to October 2014.

In total we received 8 online responses from 3 separate respondents. Issues raised related to antisocial driving, loud engine noises, use of an air horn and vehicle revving, loud music playing, shouting and swearing. Some incidents were reported to the police using the 101 contact number and, with a few incidents, it continued to cause disturbance past midnight.

We received one paper form response but the issues raised did not relate to Station Yard car park.

For context, during this five month period there were two logged calls to Police 101, both from the same person with no corresponding report on the monitoring forms<sup>[1]</sup>.

Due to the nature of the disturbances, weather and the length of day appears to have a big role to play with the level of disturbance normally peaking in the summer. The weather for the summer of 2014 was fairly unexceptional. There were some prolonged dry periods but some wetter more unsettled periods in August<sup>[2]</sup>. September saw a prolonged dry period before October returned to more unsettled, but warmer than average weather<sup>[3]</sup>.

- **Anecdotal evidence**

We were fortunate to have members from among the affected residents. They explained the impact that even small levels of disturbance can have on their lives. In particular the issues of car noise and music at night-time and shouting during the evenings were raised making some people feel unable to use their outside space because of it. The group also experienced some of the noise disruption itself from noisy cars driving past during an outdoor meeting next to the Fire Station.

Residents have also mentioned on several occasions that they have tried to report problems using the police 101 number but that this has sometimes taken a long time to do and often by the time the message has reached the local police the problem has gone away. This has led to some residents being discouraged from using 101 when incidents occur. This may lead to a degree of under-reporting.

For context, the official call handling statistics for Police 101 in Wiltshire for April to June 2014 show an average of 7 seconds to answer calls with less than 1% of calls abandoned<sup>[4]</sup>. There is no information about the average time needed to complete a call. For the two incidents reported using 101 during the monitoring period the police attended in both cases<sup>[5]</sup>.

Within the town there is definitely an impression that there are problems with the car park. In particular many people are reluctant to use the space overnight because of the perceived risk of danger to vehicles left unattended.

## **Concerns**

Any intervention has potential consequences.

- **Displacement of problems**

If the car park is no longer attractive to those causing the problems it does not mean that any underlying factors are tackled. The risk is that the problems are just moved from the Station Yard area to another part of town.

- **Long-term commitment from authorities**

Any intervention must be sustained. There is a risk that steps are taken to tackle the immediate issue but over time the focus moves to other priorities allowing the problems to return.

- **Balance between the needs of residents and users of the public space**

One person's antisocial behaviour can sometimes be another person's idea of having fun and socialising with their friends. While there is undoubtedly an issue with antisocial behaviour and driving in the area, any response needs to be balanced. To not do so runs the risk of building resentment and creating new problems.

## **Options**

Based upon the evidence we received there seem to be a number of measures that could help tackle the problems. They could be introduced separately or in combination.

- High friction strips of surfacing in the car park
- Bolt-down “sleeping policemen” strips within the car park
- CCTV
- Plant cover control
- Improved lighting (if there's no increase in light pollution for the area)

## References

- [1] Source: Email from PC Rachel Webb, Neighbourhood Policing Team Community Beat Manager for Malmesbury in response to emailed request for information  
Received: 19 December 2014
  
- [2] Source: UK Met Office weather summary for Summer 2014  
Accessed: 19 December 2014  
<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/summaries/2014/summer>
  
- [3] Source: UK Met Office weather summary for Autumn 2014  
Accessed: 19 December 2014  
<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate/uk/summaries/2014/autumn>
  
- [4] Source: **police.uk** 101 Call Handling figure for Wiltshire Police – April to June 2014  
Accessed: 19 December 2014  
[http://www.police.uk/wiltshire/EY/performance/call-handling/data/#answer\\_time](http://www.police.uk/wiltshire/EY/performance/call-handling/data/#answer_time)
  
- [5] Source: Email from PC Rachel Webb, Neighbourhood Policing Team Community Beat Manager for Malmesbury in response to emailed request for information  
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