

23 SEPTEMBER 2009

KING STREET CAR PARK, MELKSHAM

(Briefing Note: Cllr Dick Tonge, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport)

1. Preamble

At the Area Board on 1st July it was stated that the Unitary Council would consider alternative sites for lorry parking that could lead to the closure of the King Street Car park in Melksham for such vehicles.

No further sites have currently been identified that are owned by the Council in and around Melksham other than to re-locate lorry parking to another established car park in the town. Officers will continue to look for other possible opportunities in the area but currently none have been identified.

Additionally complaints have been received about lorry parking at the Hampton Park Industrial Estate.

2. The way forward

The Council request that the Area Board consider this issue with Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council to establish what other acceptable alternatives are available, including but not restricted to;

- Could the King Street be better managed? Could the layout be changed to locate the lorry parking area in a different part of the car park? Could the number of lorries be restricted to reduce the problem?
- Are there other public car parks or commercial sites that could be made available? If so, where are they, how much would they cost and how could they be funded?
- Are there existing local transport facilities that would be suitable? If so where are they, how much would they cost and how could it be funded?
- Do local hauliers have ideas to resolve these problems?
- Does the problem have to be solved locally? Are there other facilities more distant from Melksham that could be used?

3. Background

Councils are not obliged to provide lorry car parking, however, lorries have been authorised to use King Street Car Park in Melksham for at least the past thirteen years as the car park is designated for lorry parking in the Off-street Parking Order made in 1996. The former District Council remade its Off-street Orders in 2008 which continued the designation of lorry parking in King Street Car Park.

4. The Issue

Residents living adjacent to the car park have complained about the use of the car park and the noise and disruption caused by lorries (including drivers urinating against boundary walls/fences). One letter states

The first is, that whilst there has been a lorry park in King Street for many years, it is only in recent years that we have seen an escalation in both the number and size of lorries using the park – I would say from the beginning of last year – maybe earlier, we have seen more lorries that have obviously come from the Continent – some are double units which means they cannot manoeuvre and park in the allotted space but have to park directly in front of the Westlea Housing Associated buildings or Sanmax – because it is unregulated, they often park over the spaces for cars which doesn't cause too many problems as they park at night, but we did have incidents over Christmas where they took up so much space and found it so difficult to park, that shoppers in cars simply turned away – this is evidence of a major escalation in the park's use – regularly during the normal working week, the lorries have to park over the car areas due to the lack of room.

With such an increase in the numbers, the noise has become unbearable – it is now at least 2 years since I have not been woken at between 3 and 4 am by, not one, but several lorries starting up over a 2 hour period – some will run their engines for some time before moving off and over autumn/winter/spring, they will often run their engines for heating and when they do 'take off', the escalation in noise is terrible. They are certainly not all local or delivering locally. Those that are local often park tractor units and leave them over the weekend which is fine, until they take off at 3:30 on a Monday morning!

The King Street Car Park is routinely used by lorries for (particularly) overnight parking. This has been the case for at least thirteen years and clearly a demand exists for this facility.

5. The views of local Councils

Melksham Town Council has resolved to request the removal of the lorries from the car park, but Melksham Without Parish Council is strongly opposed to the lorry facility being closed down as it considers the lorry park a valuable asset.

There are concerns about the alternative locations that would be used by the lorries if the permitted parking area within King Street Car Park is shut without suitable replacement locations being found. In the worst case scenario the lorries could relocate to other residential areas causing similar types of complaints from other residents. If the lorries relocated to industrial areas there are still problems with an absence of appropriate facilities for the drivers which could also result in complaints to the Council – complaints have been received about lorry parking at the Hampton Park Industrial Estate in Melksham.

6. What has the Unitary Council done so far?

Environmental Health Officers and staff from the Amenities Section carry out inspections to identify and deal with issues relating to noise and waste. The Anti-social Behaviour Team is liaising with the Neighbourhood Police Team. The availability of the

public toilets near the Town Hall for the lorry drivers is under investigation together with improved multi language signage to encourage their use.

In addition this issue has been raised with the Road Haulage Association and the Freight Transport Association to remind their member companies of their duties and code of conduct when using this car park and to obtain their advice.

7. Continuing actions by Wiltshire Council.

The Council will continue with the actions identified in paragraph 6.

July 2009
Cllr Dick Tonge
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
Wiltshire Council