

Re: Building Control Committee Meeting February 19th 2010 viz-à-viz Parking Issue relevant to the new vehicle entrance for Prospect House, Hexham Road, Throckley, Newcastle NE15.

We acknowledge the support offered by two Councillors present at the Building Control Committee Meeting February 19th 2010, by calling for the section of Hexham Road beside Prospect House, Throckley to be the focus of special attention by the Newcastle CPE officers.

We are now in a position, having allowed two months to pass, to provide an update regarding the outcome of action instituted as a result of our plea for a long-awaited resolution to the problem.

To remind you, we explained to Committee that we consider that the unresolved illegal parking problem and the daily obstruction caused to pavement and road will potentially not only be exacerbated by vehicles exiting and entering the new opening when Prospect House is developed, according to plan, but on the basis of observations locally and photographic evidence supplied on a previous occasion to the Committee, will also obstruct the visibility splays of the new Prospect House access into Hexham Road.

The problem was acknowledged by Planning Officer Adam Nilsson as being an 'already existing' one. Throckley Residents' Action Group TRAG agrees that it is and that a satisfactory resolution is long overdue. As related at the meeting, residents have over a number of years, sought action from both Northumbria Police, but were told they 'had other priorities'; then also from the CPE, since April 2009, when that scheme was introduced. Although this section of the road is clearly marked to restrict parking, the restrictions are not implemented. Local residents, school students, pedestrians and bus drivers deserve a safer and less obstructed thoroughfare which the City Council's highway markings have surely been placed to achieve. The need for a permanent resolution by securing implementation of these restrictions may lead residents to consultation with the Local Authority Ombudsman Service.

Observations:

1. The CPE officers have, they tell us, during the period of special focus, provided what attention they are able, given the resources at their disposal.
2. When the CPE Officers were in attendance local residents witnessed drivers removing their vehicles in time to avoid penalty for illegal parking.
3. When no CPE Officers are visible, vehicles of all sizes continue to park illegally.
4. There may have been some reduction in the number of local drivers parking illegally during the CPE attendance period, but this appears to have reverted; however the frequency of parking by non-local vehicles e.g. lorries, furniture vans, tree-haulage carriers has continued at a similar level.
5. The CPE service apparently cannot provide sustained attendance at this site; initially it was treated as a 'hot spot' (as it has previously when complaints have been recorded) but is no longer receiving this higher level of attention.
6. A mobile traffic speed camera vehicle visited this section of Hexham Road recently; it was present during only the morning 'rush hour'.
7. The times of day when illegal parking is most prevalent coincide with opening hours of the nearby Fish Inn, especially lunchtimes, tea-time and the traditionally popular times for fish and chips e.g. Friday and Saturday evenings.

Conclusions:

- a. CPE Officers have a discouraging effect on illegal parking when they are present.
- b. Only if residents or others make complaints will the CPE institute 'hot spot' vigilance.
This appears to imply that residents would personally need to budget for the time and cost involved in monitoring and reporting the problem even though they already pay Council Tax for these services to be provided.
- c. The actions taken by Newcastle City Council have no lasting effect on the illegal parking problem.
- d. No lasting resolution of the obstruction to highway and pedestrian thoroughfare has been achieved by Council Services.
- e. Since the resources provided to date have not resolved the problem and residents cannot – and cannot be expected to- deal with it themselves, perhaps a different solution needs to be instituted e.g. highway measures designed to restrict the opportunity to park illegally at this section of this busy bus route and Primary School access route.
- f. Throckley Residents' Action Group needs further support beyond what has to date been provided by Newcastle City Council to address this long-standing problem. It may be that Council Officers have more permanent measures that in the light of findings at this particular site, they may consider implementing to resolve the problem.