

## **Lynden Gate Parking Survey – Third Report: The secondary issues**

### *Introduction*

This report addresses a number of secondary issues that residents raised in responses to the survey. I originally intended that we would consult on these issues but I sense that the estate is suffering from consultation fatigue and with a report running to 9 pages I doubt we would get a properly representative response. Instead I set out an outline of each issue and an indication of how the Board intends to deal with it – usually by maintaining the status quo. Rather than consult on each of these we will arrange an e-mail referendum on any issue where 10 residents request one.

Most issues relate to night time parking. This is when the estate is at its fullest. But even at night the estate is rarely full. Just occasionally most of the 70 houses are occupied and maybe there are some visitors. Then A parks in B's space so when B comes in he parks in C's space and so on – just one extra car can make several people feel they have inconsiderate neighbours. A little care can avoid these tensions.

There are around 20 possible, but sometimes inconvenient, places to park which are not customary parking spots. If we are all aware of these “Occasional Use” spots, and do not try to park either ourselves or our visitors anywhere else (without prior agreement), then we will not tread on anyone's toes. Conversely if we all recognize that just occasionally something might go wrong - we find a car in our space - and we might have to use one of these spaces ourselves then most tensions will disappear. And tensions will be further reduced if, when we are parking in an unusual spot, we recognize that we might be inconveniencing someone else so leave an explanatory note in the windscreen.

Daytime parking is much less of an issue. Visitors and tradesmen were the only real issues mentioned and these do have to be addressed.

The issues are discussed below in three sections:-

- Issues on which no action is proposed
- General issues
- Specific proposals

### *Issues on which no action is proposed*

Some comments were made by several residents which raise points which need to be answered but which do not of themselves offer any solutions. I am therefore not proposing any discussion on these but I list them here in case anyone wants to object to my inaction or has an angle that I have not seen:-

- The Board should set and enforce clear and sensible rules. Hmmm. The Board can only set rules on which there is at minimum a strong consensus or, in cases where such new rules would impinge on existing rights, complete unanimity (dream on!).

And enforcing? Lots of problems there. No, we are not going for enforceable rules here; we're aiming for neighbourly agreement and a voluntary code of conduct.

- There were many and various suggested approaches to “fair” rules on the enforceable allocation of spaces. And all of these would have worked perfectly well if they had been written into the covenants when the estate was built. But they weren't and amendment of the covenants would require unanimity which we are not going to get. But there is no need for enforceable allocation - no matter how elegantly they have been designed and no matter how many other developments have had them enshrined from the outset with their covenants - because there are enough spaces for everyone's needs and we are never going to give legal rights to a space.
- Let people know when you're away. This one is tempting and quite possible if done informally. But I doubt people will want to advertise on a web site or similar that their house is going to be empty for two weeks.
- Ban 4x4s and encourage Smart cars – yeah, dream on (it was never a serious suggestion). Don't allow multiple cars, big cars, ditto.
- Encourage people to use their garages. There is a magical place on the estate – the SE corner of Beaufort – where everybody uses their garage and they do not therefore require so many places on the road. As I write about this Paradise it makes me think of the Amish people of Pennsylvania – I don't know why. But this is the only area where garage use is uniform. Most people say the garages are too small; many use them as storage. I cannot believe a consensus that garage use is a solution is likely.
- There was one comment that people are storing stuff outside their garages. I am not proposing to ask for views on this since it is quite clearly wrong to use the roadway for this purpose and the required anti-obstruction rule already exists in the covenants.
- Everyone has the right to park outside their own garage. No they don't. They have the right of unobstructed access, which is different. Many can so park because no-one else can park outside your garage without your consent, but in many cases parking outside a garage blocks access to another garage at right angles to it.
- Many of the spots identified are virtually unusable. Yes they are, absolutely right, I can't disagree. But when you are the last one into the estate on a dark and rainy night and you find that someone has parked in your normal spot you are probably going to use one of these “virtually unusable” spots rather than park outside in Portsmouth Road. Better to identify them and decide not to use them on a regular basis than to pretend they don't exist.
- Encourage two cars from the same household to park in line in a forecourt. The idea here is that if it's your spouse parked behind you, you're not blocked in as you would be if it was someone else. We might well have to pursue this if we become more crowded, meanwhile there's nothing stopping residents from doing it as needed now.
- Ensure each resident gets an info pack. Yes – or put the information onto the website. I don't think this needs a vote of residents – we'll just do it.

Have I missed the point on any of these and if so please let me know what should we be doing?

## *General issues*

This section discusses suggestions related to general issues such as parking policies and procedures.

### *1. Do we ban visitors?*

The existing parking code discourages visitors from parking on the estate but this is an issue upon which opinions polarise. Several residents made fairly vehement comments to the effect that visitors are the cause of all our problems and that the Board are all wimps for failing to enforce the ban (I might be exaggerating a little). Others are happy to allow visitors, they say that it would be outrageous to require our visitors to park in Portsmouth Road and be vandalised and that there ought to be provision for visitors' parking. Others seemed to think that such provision already exists for example in spots 1, 47, 48 and 92.

No-one made a distinction between daytime and night-time use by visitors although I would imagine that night-time use is the more galling.

Whatever rules we make on visitors' parking need to be practical and acceptable.

The existing Code of Conduct says:-

*“Visitors should park outside Lynden Gate:*

- Non-residents parking inside the estate cause serious congestion. If your visitors park outside the estate, there will be more room inside for you.*
- Check that workmen and guests who need occasionally to be allowed into Lynden Gate do not block neighbours”*

It is clear from residents' responses that this is far from honoured so are we trying to push water uphill? I'd remain silent on daytime visitors, relying on common sense to prevail for a quite small problem. It seems to me that the choices for night time visitors are a total ban, a Parking Code request for moderation and care, no rules at all or the provision of visitors spaces in some of the 30 inconvenient spots. And if we go for a ban should we put a “Residents' Parking Only” notice on the gates as has been suggested?

The Board's view is that, while it remains helpful if visitors are encouraged to park outside the estate, visitors and third cars should take equal priority in claiming any spots not allocated to residents. We understand that informal arrangements have long been in place at the bottom of both Closes to make some provision for visitors. The resident being visited must take responsibility for ensuring that the visitor parks in one of the “Occasional Use” spots and if no such space is available visitors (and third cars) should park in Portsmouth Road. Letting a visitor park in a neighbour's spot is very high on the antisocial behaviour scale!

### *2. What new or special rules should we have for tradesmen?*

The existing code of conduct (quoted in 1 above) makes no real distinction between tradesmen and visitors – both are to park outside. Several residents blamed tradesmen for some of our woes but without being specific as to what we should do differently.

The Board's view is that tradesmen should be permitted to park inside the estate during the day only so long as they do not cause a substantial inconvenience; such parking to be at the discretion of the Estate Manager. It is the responsibility of the resident to ensure that their tradesmen are suitably parked and that a notice is displayed in the windscreen indicating which house is being attended.

3. *Do we install extra video cameras for cars parked outside on Portsmouth Road (or any other security measures)?*

It seems that people are very reluctant to park themselves and, more pertinently, their visitors in the road because of possible vandalism. It has been suggested that we install more video cameras to give greater protection.

The Board's view is that we are willing to do this if there is sufficient demand but that at present there is no indication that demand is very strong. But we would like to hear views on this and any other measures that we might take.

4. *Do we use the "spare" land in the NE corner as a storage area?*

It was suggested that we could use the area in the NE corner of the estate – which is presently used by gardeners and painters – to provide storage facilities for residents, presumably to encourage greater use of garages for cars.

The Board's view is that this has been voted on before when residents had no appetite for such a development. We would be happy to re-consider if there were a consensus that we should do so.

5. *Shall we delineate parking spots to avoid wasting space?*

It was suggested several times that we could use a discrete marker – perhaps a differently coloured pavior – to show the outlines of the parking spaces to avoid someone inadvertently straddling two of them thereby restricting the number of available spots. There is no need to do this everywhere but it might be helpful in the various "toast racks".

The Board's view is that this might be useful and that we will, in due course, arrange a trial in the Beaufort and/or Seaton toast rack.

6. *Shall we mark parking spots tastefully to identify the user and/or the space number?*

Various suggestions were made in this area. It was suggested that those few garages which are in continual use for car parking might be marked as such so that any resident casting around for a spot when his normal spot has been taken will know not to obstruct them. But many spots *outside* garages will also be in continual use so we would also have to mark those. Alternatively we could install some kind of discrete nameplate in *all* spots to identify the recognized user and/or the space number. Or we could do this for all or on request or only for those with no obvious spot outside their house.

The Board's view is that this idea has merit but is riven with practical difficulties. On dark rainy nights when your usual spot is taken it would be very handy to be comforted that if you park in an unusual spot you are not going to be shouted at. But it might only work if *all* spots are marked and markings are updated as circumstances change. We would be happy to arrange a referendum on the issue if there was an appetite for one.

7. *Do we want stickers to identify residents, and/or other car window information?*

It was suggested that we issue window stickers to indicate the cars for which spaces have been notionally assigned (and perhaps visibly indicating the normal space number). This would ensure that visitors' cars or third cars are readily identifiable. It would also be a simple mechanism to monitor the changing parking status.

And that we should encourage or facilitate various notes in car windows:-

- From residents parking in an unusual spot to say who and where they are
- From visitors to say who they are visiting
- From tradesmen to say where they are working.

The Board's view is that residents' window stickers were strongly rejected in 2002. We would need to see that there was a consensus among residents before embarking on any such scheme. In contrast, explanatory notes in visitors' windscreens are to be encouraged and we will investigate the provision of laminated cards or similar for this purpose.

8. *How do we update the allocation of spaces as circumstances change?*

The document "Lynden Gate Parking Spaces as at 11 June 2009" will be out of date quite soon because houses change hands, people buy extra cars or a variety of reasons. I can see three possible broad approaches to updating it, none of them entirely satisfactory:-

- a) Do little to nothing, let nature take its course with neighbours making local agreements as circumstances change and revise this whole project every 8 years or so. But it won't be me doing it next time!
- b) Let nature take its course but refer unresolved disputes to the Board to apply the principles of allocation. This option might be difficult or ineffective if a lot of changes are made without the Board's involvement or awareness. The Board would insist that neighbours had tried to find an agreement before reference (ie this process is not just for making a complaint).
- c) Refer all changes to the Board so that allocations are kept current. This approach has the big disadvantage of the amount of work involved. I rather doubt we will actually find someone willing to be the updater (you can tell my own appetite for the role) and it just feels a bit nanny state.

The Board's view is that the preferred approach is (b). Option (a) is too infrequent and too big a job each time; option (c) is unlikely to be feasible unless we are willing to pay someone – and we're not.

*Specific proposals*

This section discusses suggestions that relate to specific actions to improve the parking arrangements. Most of these are proposals for alterations to the roadways or gardens.

*9. What is the consensus view on protecting the gardens?*

Several suggestions were made about road widening or creation of new parking spaces. These would all impinge, to a greater or lesser degree, on the gardens. Other residents made comments, often quite strongly phrased, to the effect that there should be no reduction of gardens at all. Views will be tested (below) by discussing each suggested change but defenders of the gardens might feel that this forces them to fight a continual battle and that there ought to be a “no loss of garden” policy.

The Board’s view is that there must be no large scale loss of garden without widespread residents’ consent. We would not therefore create extra parking spaces or widen roads without consultation. However, we would be happy to undertake minor works, such as easing access to a forecourt by removing inches of flowerbed, with only local consultation and, in particular, we would take the opportunity to carry out such works when road repairs or renovations are undertaken. If residents request a policy statement we would seek the consensus by asking the pollster’s classic – “do you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree with the statement “No changes to the gardens should be allowed merely to improve parking. And why”?”

*10. Should we widen the road outside 1, 2 and 3 Beaufort?*

Several residents suggested that these spots caused difficulties either for turning into or out of the estate or in hampering the access to spots 60 and 61. I, as the owner of 1 Beaufort, can support these claims – when I used to park my car outside my house it came in for quite a battering as it was clipped by other cars and so I took to mounting the kerb. However for the past few years it has not usually been me parking there and at least one resident referred to it as “a handy spot for visitors”.

A number of approaches have been suggested:-

- a) Simply don’t use these spots. An approach already implemented for spot 3 since the owner has voluntarily agreed to park elsewhere. But hardly an ideal solution. Apart from the inconvenience to the owners of 1, 2 and 3 Beaufort (and feelings are strong here) finding alternative spots would add pressure to other areas notably the Beaufort toastrack. And to just give up three spots when there is pressure throughout the estate seems a little foolish.
- b) Park on the path. The solution, at least for spot 1, since the last survey in 2001. However, not ideal since it entails wear both on tyres (particularly my Mercedes’ radials) and kerb.
- c) Cut out some of the path to widen the road either for spot 1 alone or for spots 1-3. If done for all three spots this would deal both with turning into the estate and access to spots 60 and 61.
- d) Remove the corner of the flower bed outside number 35 Beaufort to ease access to spots 60 and 61.

- e) Do nothing. Although access is difficult it's not impossible and there are many areas on the estate where we have to drive carefully.

The Board's view is that we should modify the flowerbed to ease access to spots 60 and 61. A vote in 2001 asked for the road outside number 1 Beaufort to be widened but it was never done because we did not have a good methodology to do so. But we now do with a suitable pavior. Since then approximately 50% of the houses have changed hands and so the consensus might have changed. If residents indicate that they want this done for number 1 Beaufort and if it is possible we will be happy to arrange it. Otherwise all three spaces should continue to be used as they are although we plan to slope the kerb outside number 1 to facilitate pavement mounting.

*11. Should we remove the flowerbed outside 4 Beaufort to create an extra parking space?*

The main argument for this measure is that parking in Beaufort is very tight. Proposers say that the original design of the estate envisaged 4 parking spots in that area but that one of them was converted to garden at the request of an original owner. We now have the pavior methodology to do such works sympathetically. But it cuts out garden and that's unpopular.

The Board's view is that we would do this if there was a strong consensus to do so and no objection from immediately local residents.

*12. Should we widen the roadway to the garages in the NE corner of Beaufort?*

The roadway between 9 and 10 Beaufort is quite narrow and difficult to manoeuvre down, especially in reverse. It has been suggested that we might widen it by 6 inches or so.

The Board is not inclined to do this since we cannot widen the archway itself. However, as with all our views, we are open to persuasion.

*13. Should we create more parking spaces on the island at the bottom of Beaufort?*

There are currently 2 spots - 47 and 48 - in this area. It has been suggested that we could take some grass off both the top and bottom of the Beaufort island to create extra spaces – with possibly as many as five (running N-S) at the top and two (E-W) at the bottom.

The Board's view is that this would be a dramatic change and we would need there to be a very strong consensus that this is the right thing to do before we would contemplate it.

*14. What should we do about parking in the main entrance / access to Seaton – spots 140, 141, 72 and 137, 138 & 139?*

The comment was frequently made that spots 140 and 141 should not be used and less frequently spot 72. Access generally and specifically for emergency vehicles was commonly cited. It was also often said that spots 137, 138 & 139 restrict access to Seaton.

No-one claimed 137, 140 or 141 as their normal parking spot so presumably they are only used occasionally. But spaces 72, 138 and 139 are regularly used.

Approaches that we might adopt to this are:

- Ban or at least discourage use of 137, 140 and 141 and possibly any or all of 72, 138 and 139 – but if so where do we suggest the existing users go?
- Cut back the grassy area to the side of 3 Seaton in order to widen the road by about one foot (shaving the pavement outside 31-34 was also suggested but this is impractical and strongly opposed by local residents).
- Do nothing, leave things as they are.

The Board's view is that these are indeed problematic parking spaces. We will discourage use of spots 137, 140 and 141 by designating them as for emergency use only. But spots 72, 138 and 139 have been in use for many years with successive residents simply because they are the best practical choice. While we know that some residents are unhappy we have no feel for the overall consensus. We cannot contemplate a facile solution banning use of these spots without providing an acceptable alternative to existing users – and we cannot see an acceptable alternative. However, residents now have sufficient information to formulate alternatives if they feel strongly enough. We would contemplate widening the road only if there was a strong consensus to do so and no objection from local residents.

*15. Should we widen the road for spots 73 and 74 beside 31 Seaton?*

Some residents suggested widening the road to the west of 31 Seaton to improve parking spots 73 and 74. Perhaps because this was mentioned in the original circular as an example of works we could do, a good number of people also said they were opposed to any such change.

The Board's view is that we would do this if there was a strong consensus to do so and no objection from immediately local residents.

*16. Should we widen the road around the "dumb-bell" island in Seaton*

It has been suggested that we could shave both the circles of grass into triangle shapes to allow better vehicle access down Seaton.

The Board's view is that this would be a dramatic change and we would need there to be a very strong consensus that this is the right thing to do before we would contemplate it.

*17. Should we widen the road beside no. 28 Seaton?*

It has been suggested that we could widen the road so that cars do not have to mount the pavement in spots 80 to 83.

The Board's view is that we would do this if there was a strong consensus to do so and no objection from immediately local residents.

Neil Chisman  
11 June 2009