

Dear Sir/Madam

Response to the Proposal to have Double Yellow Lines along the Lay-by in Bysing Wood Road

We do understand the need for the bus to pull along side the kerb to allow passengers safe entry to the bus. What we are proposing is not to remove the bus stop completely. We are proposing to move the bus stop a very short distance to ensure the safety of passengers to the bus, residents and also people crossing the road. This proposal will increase safety and reduce congestion.

I am writing to you on behalf of a block of ten residents, of which I am one, that would be affected by the above proposal. We have a number of very valid issues with this and they are detailed below, together with our several justifiable and valid objections, followed by a critique of the reasons advanced for this which show them to have no validity at all as regards removing our parking. What will be shown, however, is the need for the bus stop to be moved either a few yards to either side of the lay-by, or 30 yards to outside the play area where the school bus stops everyday, so that everybody is happy.

First of all though, I would like to point out that at no stage at all have our thoughts, objections, recommendations or indeed anything been sought, either by the Complainant, the Faversham Times which has published two one sided articles based on the Complainants comments only, nor and especially Mr Brian Tovey and Faversham Town Council who are supposed to represent us as residents and Council Tax Payers. Purely by accident we discovered that a meeting had been held by the Town Council without our knowledge, based on the letter they received from the Complainant. We were not advised of this in anyway whatsoever either by telephone, letter, or indeed by someone knocking on our doors. Nor, in addition, were our views sought. Based therefore purely on one side, which is undemocratic and a breach of Council Procedure, Mr Tovey took the Complainants side completely and recommended the above. The Faversham Times then duly printed a one sided article making us to be the bad! guys when we had neither known of the meeting or said or done anything before - until now.

Concurrently, I am writing to our MP, Mr Hugh Robertson, on two matters:

1. Asking him to advise us of our legal and democratic rights over this issue. For example is Swale Borough Council allowed to accept a proposal from Faversham town Council against which a formal complaint as regards to a breach of procedure is being made?
2. I am sending Mr Robertson a copy of this mail and asking him for his independent and impartial views and for him to call and see me and see for himself the unfairness of what Mr Tovey has proposed. We will also ask him for his suggestions on resolving this. I will ask him to write to Karen Waltham separately before Friday, 25th May.

Should Mr Tovey have sought our views, then this matter would have been resolved to everybody's satisfaction in a democratic manner.

There now follows a list of our objections and for ease of reference I have listed them numerically:

1. Our houses were originally built in 1964 by Percy Bilton who provided the lay-by for parking as we are in the unique position of being in a courtyard shape and none of our properties front onto the road. This was at a time when the bungalows opposite were undeveloped and it was just green fields with horses. This safely allowed residents to load and unload their children in transport to take them to school, and if the Council propose to take away this amenity, some provision should be provided for children to safely access their parent's cars, particularly as Bysing Wood Road is extremely busy in rush hours. Additionally, this is not the only lay-by in the estate and several others were built at the same time; for example, there is another lay-by in Bysing Wood Road in front of Numbers 25-31 which do front the road and two of them have garages and driveways leading directly onto the road. There are two in Churchill Way which joins Bysing Wood Road a little further up! . They were not built for buses and no bus stops were put there when they were built. They still do not have bus stops in them. As regards our lay-by, it stayed that way for

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approximately 24 years until the end of the 1980's when without either any notice or advance warning, the bus stop was suddenly put in the middle of the lay-by with no explanation as to why. Again, why were we not consulted and our recommendations and views sought - surely as citizens, residents and Council Tax payers we are entitled to this right in a democratic society. They then painted the words "bus stop" in the middle of the lay-by and left us to get on with it.

All was well for a further 19 years until one year ago when noises started to be made. Why has this become an issue after 43 years?

2. The following points suggest why road side parking is essential to us (as our properties **do not** front the road);

- The residents in this close do have one small garage each around the back of the properties which is accessed by a system of alley ways. This is helpful for one car but most people have two cars now due to work commitments. They are also totally unlit and unsafe.
- This garage is not easily accessible to larger cars, nor is it appropriate or possible to move cars seats for small children and babies in and out of this area. You are unable to park people carriers in them at all, nor cars with roof boxes.
- When getting shopping to and from the car the only reasonable option is to use road side parking.
- There is no alternative parking in either Giraud Drive nor Wells Way as these are full up with cars parked there by residents of these two roads.

3. The following points suggest why the lay-by is essential for us to use;

- Since some of us have small children, and have a lot to carry in to our houses, we need to be at the kerb side to ensure the safety of our children.
- It is very unsafe to park on the other side of the road as this means that all people crossing the road have to walk into a busy road between these cars.

There are two lay-bys in Bysing Wood Road, both in front of houses that do not have drive-way parking to ensure that cars are kept off the road as much as possible, ensuring safety and lessening congestion (that is often seen at the top end of Bysing Wood Road where there is not this provision).

4. **Safety** - whilst we understand the importance of people being able to get onto the bus safely I think it should also be noted that residents and others who need to park their cars have the right to be safe. This change would affect our lives every day. We do not know how we would get children and shopping or bags from the car to the house safely without that lay-by. We are also concerned that people with more than one child would have an even bigger issue.

It should also be noted that there are bus stops all the way up both sides of Bysing Wood Road, none of which require a lay-by to get people on and off the bus safely.

5. **Vandalism of Bus Shelter**- this is an eyesore and is vandalised by young youths kicking it, throwing footballs at it etc., virtually every evening of the week without fail. It is constantly in a state of disrepair as a result. Recently one of the residents, who are a signatory to this mail, telephoned the Police twice who then referred it to Patrol who, in turn, did nothing at all.

6. If they put yellow lines in the Bysing Wood Road bus stop, then what about the bus stops in Stonebridge Way, the 2-3 bus stops that are in Whitstable Road and Stone Street (Saxon Road end) where cars always park and block the bus stops there. Subsequently the passengers have to walk off the curb and onto the bus and this is no different at all to the bus stop in our lay-by.

7. There is also a question over whether this proposal will also cause devaluation of our properties, since parking is a big issue for people.

8. I understand that all bus stops are now **not** in lay-bys for safety reasons, i.e. to stop buses having to pull in and out.

9. The buses stop hourly and this is not a busy bus stop that is used regularly throughout the day, but is only used by approximately 8 persons at 9am, 4 persons at 10am, then that is virtually it for the rest of the day. One of the signatories to this letter regularly travels to Canterbury in the afternoon and not only is she the only person at the bus stop, she is often the only person on the bus. These numbers are correct and you can verify them with the KCC as the drivers issue a ticket for every concessionary bus pass. In addition, it is used even less at the weekends, so for 22 hours a day, the bus stop will be idle but we would have our lives upturned.

10. In addition, and this is how we found out about the Council meeting, some passengers, have resorted to intimidation of any of the 4 mothers each time they put their children in the cars to go to school which is also around 9am. The children, aged 5-9, have been reduced to tears to hear. Two of the mums feel so intimidated, nervous and uncomfortable, that they will not go near the bus stop until the bus has been and gone. One the residents recently was so upset at the language used and the insults levied, she proceeded to telephone Mr Tovey to complain – who then advised her that a meeting had actually taken place about moving the bus stop and she proceeded to tell him that we had not been told about this meeting. He then apologised to her for this oversight and when asked why he had not collated our views, as there are two sides to every argument, he could not answer the question. Last year I was politely trying to explain to one of the passengers the danger! s of using our garages at the back because they are totally unlit and that once word gets around that young mums and their children are now forced to use these garages, they would be very vulnerable to a potentially serious assault as there are plenty of places to lie in wait in the dark. The response I received was a scornful "that's your look out; now stop parking in *our* lay-by".

The knock on effects of taking our parking away from us when there is a completely and mutually acceptable alternative would be as follows:

1. We would then be forced to park all along the opposite side of the road to the lay-by with the following consequences:

- Residents of the bungalows directly opposite, will then be faced with a whole line of cars blocking their view when they try to cross the road i.e. to the bus stop, and they would have to walk between them and then come straight out into the middle of a busy and very hazardous road. If someone were injured what legal position would the council be left in?
- The lay-by allows safe access for service vehicles when delivering to our properties. How do the Council then propose to sort this problem out when there are double yellow lines?
- Safety equally applies to the mothers in the ten houses in the courtyard going about their daily duties of taking their children to school, bringing them home from school, and going shopping in the day with those that are under the age of 5 - how is a mother to carry their child and their bags of shopping across a very busy road without putting their child's life in danger by either leaving it alone in the car whilst she takes the shopping in or alone in the house, whilst she returns to the car for the shopping?
- It will only take one car to be parked opposite this line of cars and the road will be rendered impassable. Nothing will be able to move in either direction resulting in nobody, including buses, being able to get into the town and nobody being able to get back from the town into the estate.

2. We would have to try and use the garages at the back which were built in 1964 when both cars were smaller and society was a lot different; there were no drugs, nor drug related crime for example. The garages are therefore smaller than they should be for modern day cars - it is impossible for us to park our car in the garage and get a child and their carry seat out.

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Mr Tovey seems to be acting entirely for the Complainant and there now follows our comments on what he has said. These are based upon the report in the Faversham Times of the meeting as we did not attend as we did not know about it. Mr Tovey is completely incorrect in everything he has said in the matter.

1. Incredulously he says "some residents felt that moving the bus stop was the best option leaving the lay-by for parking" - how on earth could he know this as he deliberately did not seek our opinion. He could only have been told this by the complainant
2. Mr Tovey said the proposal of moving the bus stop would force the passengers to walk further to catch the bus and for many the extra distance was significant - he is incorrect on both counts. Relocating the bus stop to the curb at either end of the lay-by would involve no extra distance at all and would allow the passengers to step straight onto the bus from a normal curb to which, I believe, the new buses have aligned their steps (as in the bus stop which is located further up the hill). At the moment the passengers have to step down from the extra high curb in the lay-by caused by the construction of the cycle path. The tiny extra distance is of no consequence or significance at all.
3. Mr Tovey says to move the bus stop 30 metres along the road to where the play park is, and where the 666 bus also stops in the mornings, would cause hardship. How? As mentioned above, they are all capable of walking much greater distances and also some passengers walk to the bus stop from Giraud Drive and this would actually be a shorter distance for them as a result, as they would then not have to turn left and walk 25 metres to the current bus stop. He has either failed to see this, or the complainant has failed to explain to him that this is the case.
4. Regarding the residents opposite in the bungalows, Mr Tovey and th Complainant have failed to see the dangers of our alternative methods of parking (because they did not seek our views) and he will actually be imperilling the residents in the bungalows opposite instead of making it safer for them. In addition, one of these residents leaves his car in our lay-by each day to which we have never objected. It therefore is clearly one rule for them and one rule for us.

The whole proposal by the Faversham Town Council is therefore half baked and very ill thought through. We feel victimised, aggrieved and let down.

On the Complainants, she has refused to talk to us because she knows all of our views are valid and she cannot answer them. To their shame, they have resorted to the intimidatory tactics, above, and also to playing the sympathy vote. It is all a great pity because if we had sat down and talked this through we would have solved this to everybody's satisfaction. We are now left with the situation where any elderly resident can come along and say she wants this or that actioned and can expect to have it done without any of the consequences or the people affected by the action, being taken into account.

However, neither the complainant nor Mr Tovey did consult us and we are now in a situation where this has escalated to a meeting of the Swale Borough Council. There reaches a point in these matters when common sense and wise heads have to prevail and we firmly hope and trust that now that this has reached your Offices, they will.

Please take everything we have said above in account and realise that this is not a "bus lay-by" but a lay-by for residents' parking and always has been. The consequences and implications of adopting this proposal for both the residents and the proposers would far outweigh any small benefits that Mr Tovey or the complainant may see. The benefits, however, of relocating the bus stop to either end of the lay-by or just 30 metres up the road, to where the 666 bus stops, would be far greater for the passengers than the current arrangement and will also benefit rather than disadvantage the ten households affected.

Thank you for enabling us to be heard for the first time and we look forward to the correct decision being made.

Yours faithfully

Mr T Wibberley (No. 42 Bysing Wood Road) on behalf of myself and

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A copy of the plan from the original deeds has been sent to you under separate cover but I have also attached a diagram of the current layout, together with photos of the other lay-by in Bysing Wood Road with the Bus Stop a little further up the road from it.

= Possible new bus stop placement

= Current bus stop location