

TO: SWALE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD
DATE: 12th December 2011
SUBJECT: Tunstall C.E. (Aided) Primary School, Tunstall – Parking and traffic issues
BY: Traffic Schemes & Member Highway Fund Manager
Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: A report for Members to consider the outcome of an investigation into traffic matters in the vicinity of the school, and the recommended course of action.

Decision Required: That Members note the report and recommend that no further action is taken by KCC Highways at this time, and for the situation to be reviewed as and when alternative funding becomes available.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 KCC Highways has received representations from Tunstall Parish Council, and residents who live opposite the entrance to Tunstall Primary School. They contend that on-street parking is creating additional hazardous conditions on the road. They request that parking restrictions be applied to regulate this.
- 1.2 Representations have been received from Kent Police (Annexe A). KCC Highways is obliged to respond to these observations. A report was previously presented to this Board on 13 June 2011, and can be viewed with the associated minute, here:

Report: <http://www2.swale.gov.uk/dso/agendalistyear.asp?uid=16>

Minutes: <http://www2.swale.gov.uk/dso/minutelistyear.asp?uid=16>

2. Background

- 2.1 Tunstall Primary School is situated in Tunstall Road, Tunstall. An entrance fronts on to this road, however the main pedestrian entrance for pupils is located at the rear of the school. This is adjacent to the village hall car park, which has marked 53 spaces, with a drop-off area adjacent to the hall (Annexe B). As a Church of England primary school, it takes in pupils from a wide catchment area including some of the outlying villages. It has a School Travel Plan, which is reviewed on an annual basis.
- 2.2 The school has 7 classes, i.e. one per year, with a maximum amount of 30 pupils per class. In the morning, the rear main entrance gates are open between 8.45-8.55am, and later arrivals must use the front entrance. Afternoon school finishes are staggered, at 3.20pm for KS1 and 3.30pm for KS2. Parents may pick up their children from the village hall car park, under a discretionary arrangement with the village hall committee. The school advises parents not to park on the main road outside the school, and to arrive at the village hall car park no earlier than 3.10pm. Outside of school opening and closing times, the gates to the village hall car park are locked shut.
- 2.3 The school has 30 members of staff, who are not permitted by the village hall committee to use the car park. There are no parking spaces on the school site, as

the land is required for playground space. However some staff parking takes place at the front of the school and overflows on to the lay-by opposite. On occasions there are also cars parked directly outside the school entrance. Some staff park their cars 0.5km away in Park Drive and walk in from there, as do some parents and children, to help alleviate the situation.

3. Investigation

- 3.1 A twofold investigation has been carried out:
- (i) An appraisal of the injury related crash record at this location
 - (ii) Two site visits, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon.
- 3.2 Kent County Council (KCC) receives many requests for parking restrictions every year. Due to substantial Government cut backs in funding, KCC cannot meet this demand from the available budget, and so has to carefully prioritise which improvements can be delivered and those that just cannot be afforded.
- 3.3 On this basis, KCC will only progress new restrictions in a situation that is deemed 'safety critical'. The definition of safety critical is where there have been injury-related crashes within the last three years, of the type that would be addressed by implementing the restrictions requested. There is no record of any such personal injury crashes in the vicinity of the school, within the last three years of available data. This means that under standard assessment criteria, the site does not meet KCC's intervention criteria for subsequent action.
- 3.4 Mr Alan Willicombe has previously indicated that he would be willing to progress an investigation into introducing additional highway measures, through the Member Highway Fund. However, his allocation for 2011/12 is fully committed. Mr Mike Whiting's allocation is also fully committed.
- 3.5 In view of the police report contained in Annexe A, a series of site visits have been undertaken to further assess the situation.
- 3.6 The first site visit took place on the morning of Thursday 20 October 2011. The KCC traffic engineer was joined by the police officer who submitted the report, and the local PCSO. The large majority of parents were observed to be using the car park and drop off facility. A couple of vehicles were parked directly outside the school in Tunstall Road. No significant congestion or safety issues were identified.
- 3.7 The second site visit took place on the afternoon of Monday 7 November 2011, attended by two KCC traffic engineers. A similar scenario was observed to the first visit, except that congestion was noted in the vicinity of the Hearts Delight Road junction. This was due to the early arrival of parents, as the gates to the car park were locked until 15 minutes before the appointed time for pupil pick-up, leading to a queue of vehicles backing up on to the public highway.
- 3.8 Photographs from the site visits are contained within Annexe B.

4. Options

4.1 Introduce school 'zig-zag' markings

These markings are prescribed for use outside school entrances, and are restricted to a maximum length of 43.56m. They prohibit waiting, with no exemptions, and are only legally enforceable if backed up by a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and signage. In Swale, the standard times for this type of restriction to apply are from Monday to

Friday, between 8.30-9.30am and 2.30-5.00pm. The primary purpose of this type of restriction is to facilitate the safe passage of children across the road to the school entrance. Very few pupils were observed to be using the Tunstall Road entrance. On this basis, although if resources were available the restriction could be introduced, its cost-effectiveness in meeting its primary purpose is questionable. Based upon similar schemes elsewhere, the estimated costs of the zig-zag markings, associated signage, and advertisement / progression of the TRO is in the region of £3,000.

4.2 Introduce double yellow lines

The use of double yellow lines directly outside a school has been shown in a recent test case to not be a suitable option for tackling issues directly associated with school opening and closing times. The adjudicator made the judgement that dropping off and collecting school children was classed as 'loading and unloading', for the purposes of enforcing parking on double yellow lines. Furthermore KCC Highways will only install waiting restrictions in a situation that is classed as 'safety critical'; and as previously discussed in 3.3 and 3.4, this is not the case in Tunstall Road. The cost of installing such restrictions would be a similar figure to the school zig-zag markings; but again, even if funding were available, their effectiveness would be questionable.

4.3 Introduce white vehicle access markings

White vehicle access marking lines are also known as dog bones, or hockey sticks. They can be provided outside a property where it can be proved that there is a persistent parking problem. These road markings are purely advisory, give no extra power to the Police to prosecute other road users, and must be paid for by the owner of the access. To introduce a new white 'access highlight' line marking on the road or to remark, or refresh an existing one, it is necessary for an applicant to prove that they have a persistent obstructive parking problem. This is to prevent too many or unnecessary lines on the highway and helps ensure markings are at priority locations and adhered to by drivers. To progress, an applicant must pay a non-refundable application fee of £115; subject to a successful application, a further fee of £150 is payable to KCC Highways, to install the lines.

4.4 Create additional off-street parking for school staff

From observations made on site, the majority of on-street parking in Tunstall Road is associated with school staff who cannot park off the highway. As mentioned in 2.2, members of school staff are not permitted to use the village hall car park. A conditional offer of six spaces was made to the school by the village hall committee; however it was on the proviso that school zig-zags are provided in Tunstall Road. This is not within the power of the school to deliver, and therefore at present, they are unable to accept the offer.

Options for additional off-street parking have been investigated by KCC officers. A planning application was previously submitted to convert the front of the school to parking; this was withdrawn at the time but remains the most feasible solution from a planning perspective. The feasibility of other options has been looked at, however these have all been ruled out on planning grounds.

4.5 Monitor the situation

As previously discussed, there is no available funding from KCC Highways at present for introducing additional parking restrictions on the public highway. Initiatives have been carried out by the school through the School Travel Plan, such as staggering school times, providing regular reminders to parents on parking matters, encouraging

'park and stride' by staff and parents alike, and encouraging car-sharing. Based upon observations undertaken at the recent site visits, these appear to have had a positive effect. Continued efforts to foster a community led solution should be encouraged. This Board has previously requested a wider consultation on the range of measures available. It is considered that in the absence of funding to implement such measures, a consultation should not be progressed at this time, as this would raise local expectation that something would be done. However if external funding does become available, a full consultation could take place on whether to introduce one or more of the options available or to maintain the status quo, with the outcome of the consultation to be considered by the members of this Board.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 That Members note the report and recommend that no further action is taken by KCC Highways at this time, and for the situation to be reviewed as and when alternative funding becomes available.

Contact Officer: Steve Darling
Traffic Engineer (Ashford & Swale), KCC Highways

Background documents:

Annexe A – Report from Kent Police
Annexe B – Location plan and photos

Report from Kent Police

A report was submitted by PC Warren Jarvis to KCC Highways on 6 June 2011. He reported that "there are periods during the morning and afternoon school runs when Tunstall Road is reduced to what is in effect one lane or blocked completely. This is caused by parents stopping outside of the school in order to drop off their children. Efforts have been made by the school to prevent this however the situation persists, there are no existing restrictions that can be enforced by the local council wardens so any enforcement has to be conducted by the local police - this is difficult to arrange."

He went on to suggest a potential solution, namely that "the provision of school keep clear lines outside of the school might help to prevent/deter poor parking however there is the possibility that this might push the problem elsewhere. There is a lay-by opposite the school that residents use to park in - the residents are the main complainants and most do have their own driveways. If some time restriction was placed on this lay-by this might alleviate some of the issues by what would in effect be widening the road at certain times, it could also give parents somewhere to drop children off of the carriageway."

Supplementary comments were provided by PC Geoff Bineham on 22 June 2011, highlighting that "during a site visit mid morning on 21/06/2011 the lay-by opposite the school was almost full to capacity and there were several vehicles parked in the road outside the school, restricting the road to one lane only. Another issue that has been brought to my attention, which may be linked to school run times. At certain times of the day the junction of Hearts Delight Road/Tunstall Road becomes congested with parked vehicles. This leads to the partial blocking of carriageways and lack of vision at the approach to and at the junction when approaching from certain directions. The local Police have received complaints from local residents. The Parish Council has been asked to consider contributing to the cost of some bollards in an effort to get the situation resolved."

To date, the initial KCC Highways response to these comments is as follows: "Report made to Swale Joint Transportation Board in June 2011, who recommended that further investigation is undertaken. More detailed report to be submitted to the JTB."

Annexe B

Location Map

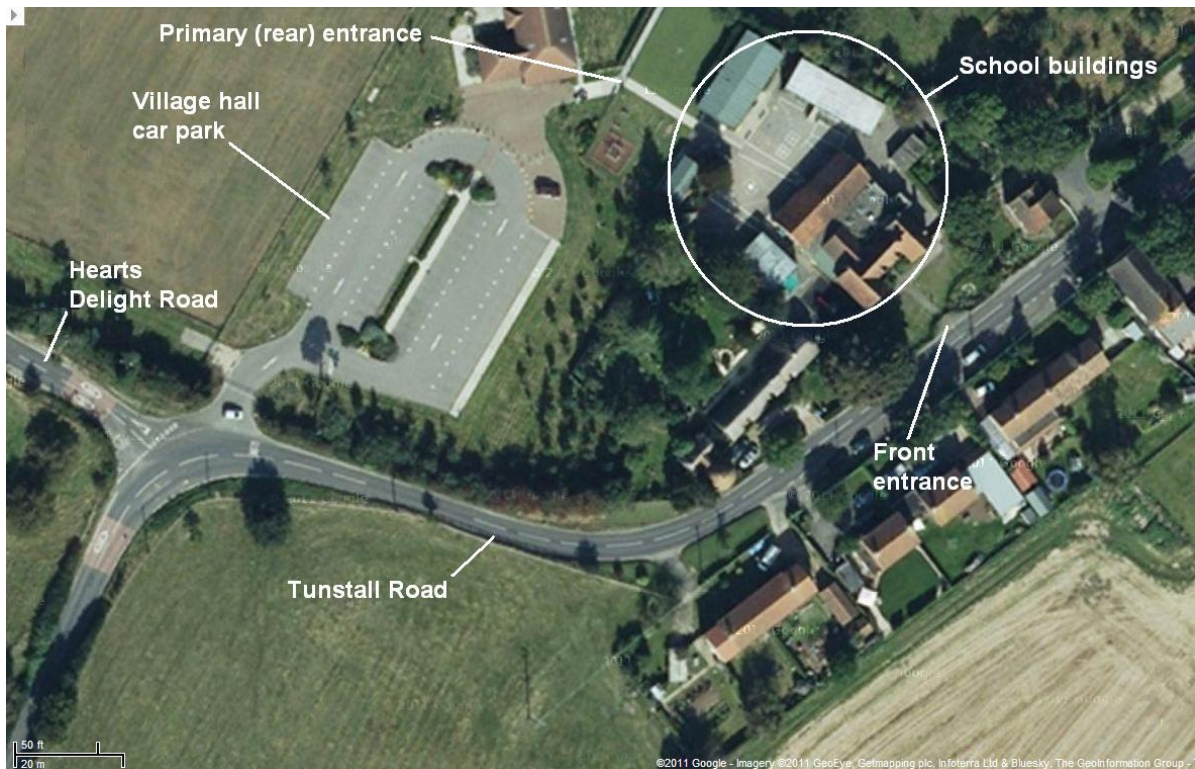


Photo 1 (looking NE past front entrance, 20 October 2011)



Photo 2 (looking SW past front entrance, 7 November 2011)



Photo 3 (Village hall car park)

