

East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 12 September 2023

Report by: Scrutiny Officer

Report title: Pedestrian Safety

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Summary – This report considers the issue of Pedestrian Safety in Hertford Castle Ward and concerns raised by Councillor Carter.

- Hertford Castle Ward residents are concerned about a range of problems which impact on pedestrian safety, in particular: pavements which have been obstructed or narrowed by overgrown hedges or verges, pavement parking, lack of gritting of pavements during last winter's snowfalls, speed limits which are too high for residential roads, rat running.
- In order to establish whether there is merit in the concerns raised by Councillor Carter, Hertfordshire County Councillor Phil Bibby (Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport) will be attending the meeting to provide a Hertfordshire County Council perspective. Sgt Alcock, Hertfordshire Police will be attending to report on the issue of enforcement of speed restrictions.

Objectives – to

- (a) consider whether there is merit in the concerns raised by Councillor Carter in bringing forward a scrutiny proposal and what actions might be necessary following evidence from Hertfordshire County Council and the Police.

- (b) To consider what methods of evaluation may be appropriate to address actions which could be introduced if necessary, following evidence from Hertfordshire County Councillor and Hertfordshire Police.
- (c) If evaluation is appropriate, set objectives and outcomes for any scrutiny review.

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 The report aims to summarise concerns raised by Councillor Carter in Hertford Castle Ward about pedestrian safety. Evidence to support Councillor Carter's concerns are attached as an appendix to this report.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In terms of groups affected, Councillor Carter has explained there are approximately 32,000 children attending 90 schools in East Hertfordshire (including 81 state and 6 independent) (Source: www.snobe.co.uk). According to the Government's National Travel Survey 2021, just under 50% of schoolchildren regularly walk to school. The picture in Hertfordshire, she says, appears to be similar, although it is not easy to obtain this information, it appears to be collected from schools using the Model-shift Stars application.
- 2.2 One survey of resident tweets about walking to school by Clarks suggests that:

'On the other end of the scale, families are least satisfied with their walk to school in South Cambridgeshire, with just 43.1% of tweets showing positive sentiment. They're followed closely by resident families in both East Hertfordshire (51.4%) and North Hertfordshire (55%).'

[Does your child walk to school? – Family Friendly Working School Runnings - Back to School | Clarks](#)

- 2.3 The Government has been working to encourage more children to actively commute to school on foot after it was reported that the percentage of primary school children who walk to school fell from 70% to 51% in one generation¹. The Clarks' report states that walking distance to school that increases beyond 1.5 miles begins to seriously decrease the likelihood of a child walking to school.
- 2.4 Only six local authorities in Britain meet the Government's statutory walking distance of 3 miles 100% of the time in terms of distance between secondary schools. These are Worcester, Tamworth, Gosport, City of London, Stevenage and Melton.
- 2.5 The city of London is the only local authority where schools are within at least 1.5 miles of another school 100% of the time. Furthermore, the Clarks' report says that the average distance between secondary schools in rural areas of Britain is 14.9 miles and in urban areas its 3.5 miles (half a mile above the UK Governments statutory distance of 3 miles between home and school) and fewer than 42% of secondary school pupils walk to school². Traffic is named as one of the biggest barriers to parents allowing their children to walk to school along with traffic "distract from home "and "too many cars being parked on pavements".
- 2.6 The Hertfordshire County Council Travel Survey 2020 shows that 24% of killed and seriously injured road casualties were pedestrians, an increase of 11% from 2018. Young people

¹ [Promoting walking in primary schools - Case study - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

² [Government Walking and cycling statistics - England 2020](#)

aged 10 – 19 formed 25.2% of pedestrian casualties and people over 60 formed 16.6%.

2.7 From the viewpoint of pavement parking there are no civic enforcement powers for the Council to deal outside of London and the Council does not collect data. If a complaint / call is received and where no restrictions apply, the caller is advised to report the matter of obstruction directly to the Police who are responsible for enforcement.

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 The evidence collected so far to support this report for scrutiny and substantiates the concerns identified is attached as an appendix.

4.0 Options

4.1 Councillor Carter is suggesting:

- Greater priority given to the needs of pedestrians, and a safer environment, particularly for school children and their parents.
- Increased satisfaction with pedestrian routes.
- Greater focus on pedestrians in planning of new developments.
- Greater proportion of budget spent on pedestrians
- Active travel encouraged.
- Reduction of carbon emissions and air pollution.

5.0 Risks

5.1 The Pedestrian Safety – Summary of Evidence appended to the report highlights the risks to both able bodied and vulnerable people this includes the impact of speeding traffic, rat running and obstructed pavements on residents not only

in Hertford Castle ward but in the District and County as a whole.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 A lack of action on the part of responsible authorities might exacerbate issues.

Community Safety

Yes – the report is all about public safety in Hertford Castle Ward

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

Yes – the report is predominately about safety.

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

Yes in relation to pavement parking. It is an offence to leave a vehicle on a road (including the pavement) in a dangerous position contrary to Section 22 of the Road Traffic Act 1988. It is an offence to

obstruct a pavement, contrary to Regulation 103 of The Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulation 1986.

Specific Wards

Yes - Hertford Castle Ward

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Scrutiny Proposal forum from Councillor R Carter.

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