

Agenda Item No: 10 **Report No:** 68/14
Report Title: Home zones and after hours use of school fields
Report To: Scrutiny Committee **Date:** 22 April 2014
Cabinet Member: Cllr Nicholson
Ward(s) Affected: All
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Purpose of Report:

Scrutiny Committee has asked that information be provided on Home Zones and the use of school facilities after hours.

Officers Recommendation(s):

- 1 To note this initial report on Home Zones and the Use of School facilities.
 - 2 To agree whether any further work is required at this time.
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Reasons for Recommendations

- 1 At a previous meeting, the Scrutiny Committee requested that a further report on play areas should be brought to the Committee, specifically looking at home zones and the use of school facilities out of term time by members of the public.

1 Home Zones

Introduction

- 1.1 Home zones are residential streets in which the road space is shared between drivers of motor vehicles and other road users, with the wider needs of residents (including people who walk and cycle, the elderly and children) being accommodated. They are about promoting quality of life and neighbourliness.

- 1.2** Although the introduction of a home zone can contribute to highway safety, the main benefit for people is a change in the perceptions of how the street environment can be used. Introducing a home zone allows greater scope for a wider range of activities in street space that was formerly considered to be for exclusive use by vehicles.

Background

- 1.3** Legislation was introduced by the Highway Act 1835 which banned the playing of football and games on the highway with a maximum penalty of up to forty shillings. In 1860 the MP for Colchester reported to the House of Commons that in the previous year 44 children had been sent to prison in London and Middlesex for failure to pay fines for playing in the street. By 1935 over 2,000 young people under the age of seventeen are prosecuted for playing in the streets.
- 1.4** Following a trial of 200 Play Streets in Manchester and Salford from 1936, the Street Playground Act 1938 allowed councils to designate streets as playgrounds where games could be played. By 1963 there were 750 such streets around the country, but there was also growing conflict between the needs of children and the needs of motorists.

Current legislation

- 1.5** The main enabling legislation for Home Zones is given in section 268 of the Transport Act 2000 which allows the creation of 'use orders' which are orders that 'permit the use of a road for purposes other than passage'.
- 1.6** Residents must be need to be consulted by the local Traffic Authority on the precise uses that can take place on the street (specified through a 'Use Order') and the appropriate speed of traffic on the street (specified through a 'Speed Order') before the Home Zone can be legally designated and signed.

Government Policy

- 1.7** The Government announced in 1998, in the Integrated Transport White Paper, that it would work with local authorities to evaluate the effectiveness of home zones. In order to do so, nine pilot schemes were established in England and Wales. These were subject to a three year monitoring period.
- 1.8** Transport 2010 - The 10 Year Plan pledged to contribute to major improvements in the street environment in towns and cities by funding more home zones.
- 1.9** The Governments Road Safety Strategy and Speed Policy Review, as well as Planning Policy Guidance Notes 3 (Housing) and 13 (Transport), reinforced the Government's commitment to home zones.

Location Selection

- 1.10** Selecting the area to be treated is one of the most important steps in the process of creating a home zone. It is considered that only roads which are predominantly residential and either have very low traffic speeds already (well below 20mph), or have measures applied to bring speeds down to these levels, are appropriate for consideration as a Home Zone. Home Zones can be designed as part of new residential developments, or retrofitted into existing residential areas by re-designing the streets.

It is important to understand the issues facing the area such as:

- traffic flows and accident figures
- population
- housing mix and density
- links to, and significant generators of, walking and cycling
- parking density
- existing traffic calming and

Design

1.11 Key elements of Home Zone design

Designing for people - Vehicles must be accommodated within the Home Zone as an integral part of daily life, but they must share the space with cyclists and people on foot. Motorists should feel that they are a 'guest' in the street.

Gateways - It is important that a strong 'Gateway' feature clearly identifies to users that they are entering (or leaving) a different environment. These features distinguish the boundary of the Home Zone and should set the tone and character for the rest of the area.

Movement - One of the main criteria for the development of a Home Zone is the creation of an environment where pedestrians and vehicles use shared space at comparable speed. This means tighter clear vehicle paths and the introduction of constraints to easy and direct vehicular passage will be needed.

Delineation - Whilst the overall concept is for pedestrians and vehicles to share the space, it is clear that in some cases definition of space is still necessary.

Parking - Improving parking can be created adjacent to houses (in-curtilage parking) or by creating structural (echelon) parking blocks along the street with a reduced and variable running width. Self-enforcement of parking is the aim within Home Zones and the best approach is a flexible

one, identifying areas where people are able to park without causing an obstruction, even to emergency services.

Lighting - The level and quality of lighting in a Home Zone is important as it can increase feelings of safety and security.

Accommodating play - One of the key objectives of Home Zones is to increase the opportunity for children to play in the streets. This can be achieved through the introduction of both formal and informal play spaces.

- 1.12 Formal play spaces can be developed as segregated areas with play equipment sited where they are well overlooked and cater for a range of ages. Sensitive siting is necessary to ensure that the play space can be adequately observed, but at the same time not creating a nuisance for neighbours.
- 1.13 Involving children and young people throughout the design process is particularly important in achieving acceptable schemes.
- 1.14 Even without formal play spaces; the creation of a less formal street can encourage play and outdoor activities where it would otherwise have been unacceptable. It is important to understand the needs and apprehensions of the community in developing play space within the Home Zone.

Potential Benefits of Home Zones

- 1.15 A home zone can turn streets into a valued public space and foster a sense of community. Greater use by people of the street space leads to an increase in natural surveillance, which in turn acts as a deterrent to crime. Any reduction in crime or fear of crime can lead to more people using the streets, so that a virtuous circle is created for the benefit of the residents.
- 1.16 By encouraging more people to use the streets on foot or by bicycle, home zones have the potential to contribute to a reduction in congestion and noise pollution, as well as improving air quality.
- 1.17 Many residents, particularly older ones, may feel isolated from their immediate neighbours. Returning the streets to areas where residents can mingle with each other can lead to a reduction in social exclusion. By creating an attractive urban environment, home zones may also help in curbing the demand for new housing in the countryside.
- 1.18 Examples of UK practice include Staiths South Bank in Gateshead, which at over 600 homes was the largest new build home zone development in the UK at the time it received planning consent. Most contemporary UK schemes have involved public realm works to existing streets in older Victorian housing areas, often to meet regeneration or traffic calming objectives.

Lewes District Council – Planning

- 1.19** LDC would consider any application for Home Zones in an existing street or in a proposed new development, however it would be ESCC as the Transport Authority who would need to make a decision.
- 1.20** It is proposed that the North Street Development in Lewes will have home zone or shared space elements.

2 After Hours use of Schools

- 2.1** Seeing school sports facilities locked up and out of bounds both after hours and during the holidays has always seemed to waste a valuable resource – particularly in areas where there is a lack of community sports facilities. Historically this has been an area fraught with issues relating to liability, upkeep and access. Sport England have recently released guidance on using school facilities after hours, however these are biased towards a commercial benefit of hiring facilities as an income source for the school. <http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/accessing-schools/getting-started/>
- 2.2** The majority of schools in the UK are involved in some form of after-school or community activity. Such activities range from homework clubs and extracurricular classes to adult education, sports and the performing arts. Despite this positive picture there is great scope for more. The government is keen to promote and encourage links between schools and their local communities, so that schools become centres of learning for the whole community and their premises and equipment are far more fully utilised outside school hours.
- 2.3** Experience in a number of OECD countries today continues to demonstrate how after-hours use of schools can improve student success through more study time, add value to the formal curriculum through extra-curricular activities, provide adults with opportunities for personal development or learning and offer the wider population a well-situated structure that can be the centre of community life.

Examples abroad

2.4 Geneva:

The playgrounds of Geneva's elementary schools may only be used by pupils during school hours but are open to the public at other times. In some downtown areas, school playgrounds are often the only place where small children and teenagers can play. In 1980 the municipal authorities launched an ambitious programme to provide 100 play areas, on school playgrounds in particular, and virtually all of these facilities have now been built. Thanks to this large-scale programme, Geneva residents now have access to safe and attractive play areas for children. This Swiss example is specific to the City of Geneva. Arrangements may differ in other areas of the country.

2.5 Ireland:

Educational facilities throughout the country are being used more and more for larger community use, while not specifically designed to do so. Ireland recognises that school premises cannot remain limited to educational use in the future and is building new schools with this in mind. Problems in the areas of insurance, liability and accountability remain to be solved.

2.6 Belgium's Flemish Community:

The policy in Belgium's Flemish Community allows for the use of all types of school facilities by a number of organisations and individuals for social, cultural and sports activities. A school's grounds, sports areas, classrooms, workshops, lunchroom, kitchen, library or theatre can be reserved any time that they are not being used by the school system. There is no rental charge for school-related groups – of parents, alumni, students or faculty – or for users organising activities expressly for students. Others who are authorised to use the space – day care services and cultural, youth and sports organisations – pay an hourly fee; prices are set by the local education authorities. All users must take out material damage and third-party accident insurance.

2.7 Turkey:

Having extended compulsory education from five to eight years, Turkey is now investing resources into accommodating its three million new students. In addition to increasing the capacity of existing schools, 345 new schools are under construction and will be used for various community activities. The new facilities are designed to meet the future needs of an evolving educational system. Schools will serve as community centres for social, cultural and sports activities. There are plans for indoor basketball and volleyball courts, as well as outdoor fields and recreational areas – all of which can be used by the community.

2.8 United States:

The United States is investing increasing sums in school buildings for activities after school, weekends and summers in high-need rural and inner-city communities. Through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers programme, the US Government provides funds to public elementary, middle and secondary schools for “educational, recreational, health and social service programs for residents of all ages within a local community”. In recognising the need for such programmes, the US Department of Education cites studies showing that the peak hours for juvenile crime and victimisation are from 2.00 to 8.00 p.m. and that adolescents who are unsupervised after school are more likely to use alcohol and drugs and are less successful in school than those involved in constructive activities.

Lewes District Policies

- 2.9** LDC has policies that seek to ensure that facilities are available for community use, however ESCC is the authority responsible for education

3 Financial Appraisal

Not required – Information Report only.

4 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

5 Sustainability Implications

I have not completed the Sustainability Implications Questionnaire as this Report is exempt from the requirement because it is an information report.

6 Equality Screening

I have completed the initial Equality Impact Assessment screening exercise and have identified no negative impacts arising from this Report. Therefore, a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

7 Appendices

None

8 References

OECD (1999), “After-Hours Use of Schools”, PEBExchange, Programme on Educational Building, 1999/10,

Traffic Advisory Leaflet 10/01 December 2001

HOME ZONES Challenging the future of our streets – Department of Transport 2005