

Ottery's Top Traffic Worries Revealed...

Regeneration Group member Dave Moss reviews some comments and concerns from the recent local traffic survey.

The traffic sub committee of Ottery St Mary Town Council's regeneration group submitted its 86 page report to the council earlier this month. Three months in preparation and with a year's research behind it, from the end of March the report can be viewed on the Town Council's website, and a reference copy is available at the Library . It considers traffic issues affecting the town, with a close eye on possible future regeneration - an aspiration of the Neighbourhood Plan introduced last summer.

Much of the report's content is firmly founded on local views and opinions, derived from an informal public survey widely circulated last Autumn. There were almost 250 returns from that survey, so a big thank-you to everyone who responded - from the Town Council, and the traffic sub-committee. Your responses were invaluable in assessing the town's biggest traffic issues for the report, and will help inform future planning on Ottery's Road to Regeneration.

We'll review some key survey findings in this spot next month - but respondents were also invited to comment on town traffic issues not covered in the survey questions - and over 100 people did just that. Some added notes - occasionally pages - detailing concerns, often expressed with passion, sometimes with exasperation - and occasionally despair. These comments appear anonymously in abridged form in the report.

Points raised covered many different areas, though six big unprompted traffic concerns emerged. The biggest, with 37 separate mentions, were specific roads which are reportedly home to frequent, ongoing examples of bad parking or yellow line abuse. These included Slade Road, Chineway, North Street, Paternoster Row, Tip Hill, Ridgeway, Butts Hill, Jesu Street, Yonder Street, and Broad Street square. Special mention here for the area around Ottery St Mary Primary School, including the St Marys area, and Longdogs Lane. There were six mentions each for parking involving Primary school pick-up and drop off - and parking in the Slade Road/Chineway junction area, with various calls for additional yellow lines here to prevent dangerous parking and main road visibility problems.

The Silver Street narrow section and Silver Street/Broad Street junction gained 25 specific mentions. Fourteen concerned difficulties in the narrow section, with comments such as "people don't know how to use the yellow box area," while several people wanted a formal priority system here, with appropriate signage. The temporary traffic lights following the recent fire were favoured by seven people - and prompted no negative comments. A single respondent wanted a ban on right turns out of Broad Street into Silver Street.

The North Street, Paternoster Row and Butts Hill area scored 23 mentions, with North Street parking problems accounting for 13 of them. Parking overflowing onto double yellow lines at the Paternoster Row/Ridgeway junction came up twice. Butts Road got 7 mentions, largely requesting more yellow lines at the Butts Hill junction. Good news here: installation of these is going ahead as funds allow.

There were lots of "yellow line abuse" reports in particular places, with 17 mentions of yellow lines (or loading bay regulations) being ignored in Yonder Street near McColls/Post office. There were 10 mentions for Jesu Street - with Tip Hill corner and Tip Hill together scoring 8 mentions for inappropriate parking causing difficulties for pedestrians and drivers. Broad Street square gained 6 mentions, split between inappropriate parking, multiple parking on yellow lines, or bus lay-by blocking, creating additional traffic problems when buses double park. There were also requests for more pedestrian crossing points in the square.

Many respondents indicating parking problems like these felt the issue isn't a lack of necessary restrictions. Some 15 respondents directly indicated frustration and a sense of injustice - because the problems described were seen as regular occurrences in similar locations, but with little or no enforcement action apparently taking place.

Pavements scored 12 separate mentions. Topics were wide ranging - narrow pavements in Tip Hill, pavement parking in Brook Street, pavement wanted on Shutes Mead - with speed reduction measures - irresponsible cycling on the Hind Street pavement, general requests to stop pavement parking, painted-out parking restriction signs in Ridgeway - and more. One respondent wanted better pavement maintenance, also noting with dismay that tarmac has replaced block paving in parts of Mill Street.

In analysing the many additional comments, we sometimes sensed great frustration. The feeling of powerlessness to get action on "bad parking" situations at times seemed near tangible, particularly with claimed inadequate enforcement of yellow line "no waiting" regulations. To help on this, below is some general guidance on getting action to address yellow-line related issues and concerns.

Getting yellow line regulations enforced

Since the de-criminalisation of yellow line offences in 2005, general enforcement of roadside yellow line regulations has been a Devon County Council responsibility. During preparation of the Traffic sub-committee report we discussed inappropriate parking with the local PCSO, who indicated police involvement in such matters is now very limited. He confirmed the police were aware of various issues, and advised they may (and do) take action over illegal "obstruction-type" offences, and in cases of dangerous parking. Such offences can be reported via the police non-emergency number - 101.

If you feel that yellow line enforcement is insufficient in a particular area, there are two ways to get action. Specific parking enforcement can be requested by entering locations via the Devon County Council website, which also allows easy reporting of various other highway-related matters like pavement parking offences, potholes, and faulty streetlights. These matters can also be raised with your County Councillor.

Getting yellow lines installed

Installation of new yellow lines must follow a set procedure involving consideration by HATOC - the County Council's area Highways and Traffic Orders Committee. Though it can appear slow and somewhat bureaucratic, the process works - the yellow line installation at the Butts Hill/Butts Road junction recently completed this

process. To get the ball rolling if you think new yellow lines are needed, contact your County Councillor.

To request parking enforcement:

https://new.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/map/map_src/parking/

To report pavement parking:

<https://new.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/parking/pavement-parking/reporting-pavement-parking/>

Reporting general road problems - potholes, faulty street lights, etc

<https://new.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/>

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