

Walsham le Willows Parish Council

Report on investigations with Highways re the building of extra parking spaces on Finningham Road outside Oak Tree Cottages.

Highways have advised that the green space in front of Oak Cottages is Flagship land, the path and carriageway are Highways. Flagship could make over the land to Highways with a legal notice. Flagship also have the expertise and knowledge to drive and deliver a project like this as they do it all the time when they are building homes. However, it is likely that this would probably also need planning permission.

The chances of Highways buying the land required is basically a non-starter at the moment due to years of budget cuts. They cannot even afford to maintain that they have let alone take on responsibility for more.

On the grounds of cost, it was suggested that if such a proposal were to go ahead, parking spaces might be created that cross a lowered pavement rather than creating a layby and moving the path back behind the new layby. Although the former specification would probably be more dangerous on that bend and narrow road the latter would be more costly.

Costs would also be increased by the fact that the green space land would need to be lowered as it is higher than the pavement (it slopes up so is higher the further back one goes).

The other issue is utilities. Whatever option were to be taken it looks like utilities have been laid under the green space (almost certainly under the pavement as well). These would all have to be moved and protected from whatever vehicles were deemed likely to park there, possibly large lorries if it were long enough). These costs do not become apparent until after planning permission and agreement from landowners has been obtained and possibly even after work has started. That would tend to imply a lack of documentation of what has been where by potentially multiple private entities.

An example was given of a small stretch in Lowestoft that was recently considered, and it was found that the costs to move and protect the utilities came to £40k.

The layby would be more expensive than the other option. I asked for a ball-park idea of costs and the person I spoke too was unable to hazard a guess in large part due to the unknowns around the utility issues.

It is clear that this would involve a number of entities in order to achieve the objective, Highways, Flagship, Planning, and however many utilities turned out to have an interest. Sounds very expensive to me and the Parish Council would have to foot the bill unless Flagship are going to. I suspect it will be pretty much as difficult to get them to do that as Highways just for a couple of parking spaces.

I was also told that Highways always caution that when implementing these sorts of schemes traffic speed always increases as a result.

Kevin Boardley

Clerk to Walsham le Willows Parish Council

12 October 2020