

Committee/Meeting: Overview & Scrutiny	Date: 30 November 2010	Classification: Unrestricted	Report No:
Report of: Corporate Director Development & Renewal (D&R) Originating officer(s) Richard Finch and Jack Ettinger Strategic Transport Planning Planning & Building Control		Title: Car Free Development Schemes and Parking Permit Arrangements - Progress Report Wards Affected: All	

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the progress made by Tower Hamlets Council officers to resolve the matter of the on-street car parking permits that were issued in error to residents of a car free development scheme that was highlighted at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 6 April 2010.
- 1.2 This report also outlines how officers have worked to create an improved and more robust administration system for car free homes secured through the planning application determination process.
- 1.3 The actions undertaken to date include:
 - an officers' 'Car Free Review Group' (CFRG) has been established to direct the work undertaken to resolve the administration issues outlined above;
 - databases holding data on car free developments by Parking Services and Planning have been aligned;
 - individual instances where on-street parking permits have been issued to residents in error of car free homes are being resolved; and
 - information on car free homes being offered to prospective tenants through the Council and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) has been made clearer on the Homeseekers pages of the Eastend Life newspaper and related website.

2. Background

- 2.1 It was reported at the April 2010 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the Council had received a number of complaints from residents who had been informed they would no longer be granted on-street car parking permits having previously believed they were entitled to one.
- 2.2 All of the concerns received were from residents of car free designated homes.

- 2.3 Some residents have also reported that the car free status of their homes, and the implication that they would not be entitled to an on-street car parking permit, had not been communicated to them by their landlords.
- 2.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6 April 2010 also discussed the issue of incorrectly issued car parking permits to some residents living in Gaverick Mews, London E14.
- 2.5 To address the issues raised at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in April 2010, the Council has formed a CFRG to provide a cross-directorate review of, and make improvements to, the process of implementing car free developments.
- 2.6 Tower Hamlets Council's car free development policy is part of this authority's recently adopted Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy (policy SP09.4) that states: '*Promoting car free developments and those schemes which minimise on-site and off-site parking provision, particularly in areas with good access to public transport*'.
- 2.7 Tower Hamlets Council has been securing car free homes using the planning application determination process since the late 1990s as a policy response to encourage a reduction in car based travel and related pollution levels resulting from new developments in the borough.
- 2.8 The development of car free homes also helps to promote healthier, greener, more climate-friendly lifestyles, as well as creating safer, less car dominated environments in support of local, regional and national planning policy.
- 2.9 Car free homes are implemented alongside sustainable travel alternatives, including car clubs, the TfL London Cycle Hire scheme and improved walking, cycling and public transport networks.
- 2.10 The Mayor of London and other London councils are also promoting the development of car free homes planning policy as part of creating a better, greener city for all.

3. Car Free Review Group (CFRG)

- 3.1 Since April 2010, officers across the Council have worked hard with RSL partners and residents to identify and agree a way forward to improve the administration system for car free homes secured through the planning application determination process
- 3.2 The CFRG has overseen this work and comprises officers from:
- Building Control – Development & Renewal;
 - Development Control - Development & Renewal;
 - Development Implementation - Development & Renewal;
 - GIS Mapping Service - Development & Renewal;

- Legal Services – Chief Executive’s;
- Parking Services – Communities, Localities & Culture;
- Strategic Housing - Development & Renewal; and
- Strategic Transport - Development & Renewal.

3.3 The CFRG has met seven times since its formation to date. Under the terms of reference, the CFRG is responsible for:

- reviewing the current process of implementing car free developments;
- identifying weaknesses in that process;
- putting in place improvements; and
- communicating these improvements internally and externally as required.

3.4 Under the guidance of the CFRG, officers have made number of key process improvements in response to issues identified to ensure the more robust implementation of the Council’s car free development policy by developing integrated development management decisions with effective administrative processes.

3.5 Sections 4, 5 and 6 of this report describe the challenges found in the process and improvements made to deal with them to date.

4. Database Cleansing and Data Matching

4.1 Following a number of instances where residents have been issued on-street parking permits despite living in a car-free property (including Gaverick Mews), officers undertook a review of the database systems used to implement the car free homes policy.

4.2 As a result of this review, databases in Parking Services and Planning have been better aligned, and are matched on a daily basis, to ensure that they share information at the correct level of detail and data is consistent between the two information systems.

4.3 This new process should ensure that there would be no further occurrences of residents being issued with on-street parking permits in error despite living in car free homes.

5. Permits Issued in Error to Residents Living in Car Free Homes

5.1 The case where on-street parking permits have been issued in error to residents living in car free homes in Gaverick Mews was highlighted at the 6 April 2010 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In this instance, the permits were issued in the early stages of implementing the car free policy and since then the administration processes have been greatly improved.

5.2 To date, meetings have been held with the relevant RSL and the current way forward has evolved from these meetings. Letters have been distributed to the

affected residents of Gaverick Mews to inform them that that they will be able to continue to renew their annual on-street parking permits.

- 5.3 While this approach has been taken for residents at Gaverick Mews, it has not and will not be applied to all instances where on-street parking permits have been issued to residents at car free developments in error.
- 5.4 Where a resident has been issued a parking permit in error, the Council's general approach will be to allow them a six month extension to their existing permit to make alternative arrangements before their entitlement to an on-street parking permit is removed.
- 5.5 The Council's general stance on this matter has recently been upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman.

6. Improving Communications with Residents and other Stakeholders

- 6.1 The CFRG has designed more effective ways to promote the car free homes policy to internal and external stakeholders, emphasising the existence of car free developments and the positive contribution they make to the sustainable transport and quality of life agenda.
- 6.2 Officers have received correspondence from a number of residents living in car free developments stating that the car free status of their current home was not advertised on the Tower Hamlets Homeseekers pages in the Eastend Life newspaper or the related website when they applied for their home.
- 6.3 As a consequence, the CFRG has reviewed how the Council communicates information on car free homes and parking permit entitlement to residents and has made a number of improvements as outlined below.
- 6.4 The wording explaining car free homes in the Eastend Life newspaper and Tower Hamlets Homeseekers website has been revised by officers to more clearly articulate that if a home is designated as car free residents will not be able to apply for on-street residents parking permits.
- 6.5 The revised text is currently being considered by the Tower Hamlets Common Housing Register Forum and will appear in forthcoming editions of the Eastend Life newspaper and on the Tower Hamlets Homeseekers website. An example of a car free home advertised on the Homeseekers website can found in the Appendix.
- 6.6 Text on the Parking Services web pages on the Council's website has also been updated to ensure all information relating to car free homes is accurate and consistent. A 'screen-shot' of the updated page can be found in the Appendix.

7. Improving Communications through RSLs

- 7.1 Tower Hamlets Council officers met with RSLs in September 2010. This meeting was held to discuss the importance of RSLs meeting their legal

obligations under the car free clause (ie to inform their residents of when their homes are designated as car free).

- 7.2 At the meeting, RSLs have agreed with Council officers (through the Common Housing Register Forum) to:
- insert a clause into property offer letters clearly informing prospective tenants of the car free status of the property being offered;
 - provide an information leaflet (produced by Council officers) to accompany the offer letter providing information on the parking restrictions applicable to any occupant of a car free home; and
 - prospective tenants will be asked to sign the information leaflet confirming that they understand their home is designated as car free and therefore will not be eligible for on-street car parking permits.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 Since the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's meeting on 6 April 2010, officers have worked constructively across directorates and with RSLs to resolve key issues around the administration system for car free homes secured through the planning application determination process.
- 8.2 Improvements to the data systems used to implement car free developments have been put in place and the information on car free homes has been made clearer and consistent across all relevant Council and RSL communication channels. These changes should significantly reduce the number of instances where residents of car free homes are issued on-street parking permits in error.
- 8.3 The Tower Hamlets Council CFRG will continue to meet periodically when appropriate to resolve matters arising that fall under the terms of reference of this officer group.

9. Appendix

- 9.1 Updated information material on Car Free Homes

Contact officers:

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Jack Ettinger, Strategic Transport Planner, Planning & Building Control, D&R

Appendix – Updated information on Car Free Homes

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a property listing on the Tower Hamlets Homeseekers website. The browser's address bar shows the URL 'Tower Hamlets Homeseekers - Property details'. The page features a navigation menu with 'Properties' and 'Contact' options. A prominent purple banner at the top reads 'To start bidding for properties please LOG IN'. Below this, there is a small image of a modern building. To the right of the image, the listing details are organized into sections: 'Landlord' (Tower Hamlets Community Housing), 'Occupancy' (1 Bed 2 Person, 1 BEDROOM), 'Accessible Housing Category' (Category C - Lifetime Homes), and 'Facilities' (Flat, 3rd floor, New build, Open plan kitchen, Electric radiators, No garden, Bathroom with W/C, Pets not permitted, Car free home). A blue link on the left side of the listing says 'Click here to download: CAR FREE HOME INFORMATION'. The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows the system tray with the time 21:48.

Example of advertisement for a car free home on the Tower Hamlets Homeseekers website

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the 'Car free developments' page on the Tower Hamlets Council website. The browser's address bar shows the URL 'Car free developments'. The page has a blue header with navigation links: 'A to Z | Online Services | News | What's on | Contacts | Site Map | Text Size: A A A | Browse Aloud'. A search bar is located on the right side of the header. The main content area is titled 'Car free developments' and includes a 'Background' section. The background text explains that car free developments are a response to rising congestion levels in London and are often designed in conjunction with other congestion reducing measures. It also mentions that local authorities and other planning bodies are contributing to this process through incentives to developers. A sub-section titled 'Car free development agreement made under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990' provides further details, stating that if a property is subject to such an agreement, the holder of a disabled person's (blue) badge issued under Section 21 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Person's Act 1970, or if they meet the eligibility criteria as a social housing decantee, will not be able to apply for any type of on-street parking permit or scratchcard. The page concludes with the statement: 'It is the responsibility of your solicitor or landlord to advise you of this agreement before you purchase or rent the property.' The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows the system tray with the time 21:45.

Screen-shot of the revised car free developments page on the Tower Hamlets Council's website Parking Services webpage

For more detailed information about the following adverts please visit the Homeseekers website at www.thhs.org.uk



2 BEDROOMS
Accessible Category E
MAYNARD HOUSE, OLD FORD
RD, E2
2 Bed 4 Person • Ground
• Separate kitchen • No Lift •
Bathroom and W/C •
• Private garden • Pets
permitted

£109.36, Weekly
Landlord: Tower Hamlets Council
Property Ref: 18664



2 BEDROOMS
Accessible Category F
WAGER STREET, E3
Maisonette • 2 Bed 4 Person • 2nd
floor • Separate kitchen • No Lift •
Bathroom with W/C • GCH • No
garden • Permit parking • Pets not
permitted

£109.36, Weekly
Landlord: EastendHomes
Property Ref: 18653



2 BEDROOMS
Accessible Category F
GRINDLEY HOUSE, LEOPOLD
STREET, E3
Maisonette • 2 Bed 4 Person • 3rd
floor • Separate kitchen • Two lifts
• Entryphone • Separate Bathroom
and W/C • GCH • No garden •
Permit parking • Pets not permitted

£142.55, Weekly
Landlord: Poplar HARCA
Property Ref: 18657

sorry
no picture available

3 BEDROOMS
Accessible Category F
RAYNERS TERRACE, CARR
STREET, E14
Flat • 3 Bed 6 Person • 1st floor •
Separate kitchen • No Lift •
Entryphone • Separate Bathroom
and W/C • GCH • No garden • Car
free home • Pets not permitted

£107.74, Weekly
Landlord: Gateway Housing
Association
Property Ref: 18673



3 BEDROOMS
Accessible Category D
IFFLEY HOUSE, ARNOLD
CIRCUS, E2
Maisonette • 3 Bed 6 Person • 2nd
floor • Kitchen diner • One lift •
Entryphone • Bathroom with W/C •
GCH • No garden • Pets permitted

£129.41, Weekly
Landlord: Tower Hamlets Council
Property Ref: 18663



2 BEDROOMS
Accessible Category F
DEZER MUSSEL HOUSE,
TROT SQUARE, E2
Maisonette • 3 Bed 4 Person • 2nd
floor • Separate kitchen • No Lift •
Bathroom and W/C •
No garden • Pets permitted

£107.28, Weekly
Landlord: Tower Hamlets Council
Property Ref: 18666



3 BEDROOMS
Accessible Category F
MILE END ROAD, E3
Maisonette • 3 Bed 5 Person • 2nd
floor • Separate kitchen • No Lift •
Entryphone • Separate Bathroom
and W/C • GCH • No garden •
Pets permitted

£107.28, Weekly
Landlord: Tower Hamlets Council
Property Ref: 18675



3 BEDROOMS
Accessible Category F
REBECCA HOUSE,
BROOKESLEY STREET, E3
Flat • 3 Bed 5 Person • 2nd floor •
Separate kitchen • No Lift •
Entryphone • Bathroom with W/C •
GCH • No garden • Permit parking
• Pets not permitted

£104.50, Weekly
Landlord: Industrial Dwellings
Society
Property Ref: 18691



4 BEDROOMS
Accessible Category F
CORRINGHAM HOUSE,
PITSEA STREET, E1
Maisonette • 4 Bed 6 Person •
Ground Floor • Separate kitchen •
No Lift • Entryphone • Bathroom
with W/C and Additional W/C •
GCH • Private garden • Pets
permitted

£117.50, Weekly
Landlord: Tower Hamlets Council
Property Ref: 18696



5 BEDROOMS
Accessible Category D
WICKHAM CLOSE, E1
House • 5 Bed 10 Person • Ground
Floor • Separate kitchen • No Lift •
Separate Bathroom and W/C •
GCH • Private garden • Off street
parking • Pets permitted
Additional WC

£139.28, Weekly
Landlord: Paddington Churches
HA
Property Ref: 18693



Tower Hamlets has nomination rights to 2 x 2 bedroom houses, 1 in Maldon & 1 in Grays, Essex.

These properties should be available to let early 2011. To qualify you will need to be a social housing tenant on the Council's Housing List. Priority will be given to those tenants giving up the most bedrooms.

If you would like to be considered please contact the Council's Lettings Team on 0207 364 0265

Closing date for enquiries 30th November 2010

Reminder to all Homeless Applicants

Remember that homeless applicants receive 1 offer only, also remember that if you select a property that is offered to you, but it is not your ideal size, it will be treated as an offer under the council's statutory homeless duty.

This means the council will no longer have an obligation to assist you with housing under Homeless Legislation. For example, if you require a 3 bedroom property, but bid for and are offered a 2 bedroom property, you will be expected to accept the tenancy and vacate your temporary accommodation.

CAR FREE HOMES - No On-Street Parking Permits Issued

If the property advertised is subject to a 'Car Free Home' planning agreement made under Section 106 of the Town and County Planning Act 1990 then (unless you are the holder of a disabled person's blue badge) you will not be able to apply for any type of on-street vehicle parking permit.

To assist residents who live at a car free development you may apply for a temporary permit, at the current rate of £5 a day, to allow trades persons to carry out work on the property. To qualify for a temporary permit you must provide written proof of the work to be carried out along with the vehicle details and can only have a maximum of 20 days in a rolling 6 month period.

Alternatively you can now apply for scratchcards for trades persons & visitors which allows parking for up to 5 hours weekdays and all day at weekends. Households can apply for up to 3 books of 10 scratch cards in a rolling year at a cost of £10 each book. These are free for residents over 60.

On some developments containing Wheelchair - Category A or B properties parking may be available for those homes. Information on this will be provided by the Landlord if not contained in the advert.

Extracts from the Homeseekers pages of the Eastend Life newspaper showing the revised explanatory text on car free homes (bottom right) and a notice for a car free home (top row, second from right)