

Item 9 - Pavement parking consultation launched

Department for Transport says ending anti-social parking on footways will help the disabled, families and support social distancing

Mark Moran

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Pavement parking presents a clear safety risk when parked cars occupy the pavement and force vulnerable pedestrians to move into the road. Now, parking on pavements could be banned across England under government plans to ease journeys for disabled people and parents pushing prams.

Parking on footways is banned in London but elsewhere in the country it is only prohibited for lorries, with local authorities left to introduce prohibitions on a street-by-street basis. It is currently an offence to cause an unnecessary obstruction on the highway, which is only enforceable by the police.

The Department for Transport (DfT) said it wants to make pavements safer for people with disabilities and families by banning anti-social parking. The department said parking on pavements disproportionately affects people with visual or mobility impairments, those assisted by guide dogs, and wheelchair and mobility scooter users.

Disabled people say that pavement parking is a significant barrier to carrying out daily journeys. A review of the issue conducted by the DfT indicates that more than 95% of wheelchair users and people with visual impairments say they have faced problems as a result of vehicles parked on pavements. Recent research from the charity Guide Dogs shows that 32% of people with vision impairments and 48% of wheelchair users were less willing to go out on their own because of pavement parking, decreasing independence and contributing towards isolation.

Three options are proposed in the consultation:

1. improving the traffic regulation order process to make it easier for councils to prohibit pavement parking in their areas
2. giving councils powers to fine drivers who park on paths
3. London-style nationwide ban on pavement parking.

However, the department says there is still a major role for cars and other private vehicles, so any future plans will need to take this into consideration. As many streets were built decades and centuries before the high levels of vehicles currently on roads, the DfT measures will need to ensure the free-flow of traffic and access for the emergency services.

To see the consultation documents [click here](#)

The issue of pavement parking has been highlighted in a long-running campaign run by the charities Guide Dogs and Living Streets. The charities have attracted support from MPs, who have launched Private Member's Bills on the issue, and have been supported by a wide range of organisations, including Mumsnet and the British Parking Association.

While a consultation on pavement parking has been expected for some time, the emphasis on encouraging walking and cycling as means of aiding social distancing in urban areas seems to have been a factor in its launch on the August Bank Holiday. The consultation is being framed as the latest step in the government's pledge to deliver on commitments to make transport equally accessible for all users by 2030, as set out in the Inclusive Transport Strategy.

Transport secretary Grant Shapps has been stepping up efforts to encourage active travel – such as walking – as part of a green, post-COVID recovery, and level up road quality across the country. The government announced £2bn in May to get more people walking and cycling, and £2.5bn in the Budget towards repairing potholes as part of a nationwide programme.

Shapps said: "Parking on pavements means wheelchair users, visually impaired people and parents with push chairs can be forced into the road, which is not only dangerous, but discourages people from making journeys. A key part of our green, post-COVID recovery will be encouraging more people to choose active travel, such as walking, so it is vital that we make the nation's pavements accessible for everyone."

The consultation period began on 31 August 2020 and will run until 22 November 2020.

Reactions

The Department for Transport consultation follows intensive lobbying by charities such as Guide Dogs and Living Streets, who welcomed the announcement.

Stephen Edwards, director of policy and communications at Living Streets said: "We're regularly contacted by disabled and older people who feel trapped in their homes because there isn't enough room on the pavement for wheelchairs or mobility scooters. This has impacted more people during the pandemic with blocked pavements affecting everyone's ability to physically distance."

Blanche Shackleton, head of policy, public affairs and campaigns at Guide Dogs said: "For many people with sight loss, cars and vans parked on the pavement make our streets stressful and dangerous to navigate. At any time, you might be forced out into the road with traffic that you cannot see. When every journey is an ordeal, simply going out independently can become daunting."

There was also support for action on pavement parking from the Mumsnet online forum. **Justine Roberts**, founder and chief executive of Mumsnet said: "Lots of us have occasionally parked a couple of wheels up on the pavement to leave space on the road without really thinking about how it might inconvenience people. It's a topic that comes up regularly on Mumsnet, where wheelchair users and people with buggies share stories about being forced into the road, or having to double back long distances."

Motoring organisation AA struck a more sceptical tone, calling for site specific action and alleging local authorities will be motivated by the opportunity to generate revenue. **Jack Cousens**, head of roads policy for the AA, said; "A driver who deliberately parks in an obstructive manner and blocks the path of any pedestrian should expect to be punished."

However, an outright ban on pavement parking could cause a series of unintended consequences. As we have seen over the past few weeks with road closures and narrowed roads, councils have acted with little consultation and in many cases lost confidence of the communities they serve. Local authorities should make a street-by-street assessment and where pavement parking is allowed, markings should show how much pavement can be used. While councils have always had the powers to tackle problem parking, it would be typical if the only time they act is when there is fines income to be had from it.”

The logistics sector has advised a cautious approach. In her response to the consultation on pavement parking in England, **Natalie Chapman**, head of urban policy at Logistics UK, said: “Logistics UK’s members agree that pavements are for pedestrian use first and foremost – their safety and access must come first – and this is particularly important for vulnerable groups such as wheelchair and pushchair users and for the blind and partially sighted. But we must also ensure the government considers the needs of logistics in its decision making to ensure that goods can keep moving efficiently and effectively through our towns and cities.

“For example, the government must ensure a pavement parking ban does not further narrow residential streets where cars currently park partially on the pavement, as it could prevent access for refuse collection vehicles, home deliveries and emergency services.

“In addition, there will be occasions where commercial vehicles need temporary pavement access for loading or unloading goods to prevent blocking the road to passing traffic. We will be submitting a response to the consultation to ensure the government’s strategy takes these situations into account and puts appropriate exemptions in place.”

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/review-of-the-highway-code-to-improve-road-safety-for-cyclists-pedestrians-and-horse-riders>

What do the Highway Code proposals mean for pedestrians and cyclists?

Changes under consultation follow raft of cycling and walking announcements

[Laura Laker](#)

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Amid the storm of Covid-19, [a raft of cycling and walking announcements has landed](#) as part of the government’s attempt to promote a healthier population, save the NHS from collapse and fend off the worst outcomes from coronavirus.

[The plans were in the pipeline before the pandemic](#) and are good news for anyone who wants cleaner, safer roads, and residential streets that don’t moonlight as rat runs for short-cutting drivers.

Alongside long-awaited design guidance for cycling infrastructure, training schemes and £50 vouchers for bike repairs, there’s a much-needed [Highway Code](#) review for walking and

cycling. Although it isn't grabbing the headlines, it is potentially one of the most impactful parts of the announcement.

The Highway Code matters because it shapes the culture on our roads, from how road users treat each other, to how we police road users.

Three of the most important proposals, which follow a [review announced in 2018](#), are:

- An explicit road user hierarchy, with vulnerable road users at the top. This means priority for those walking and cycling over those turning at side roads.
- Rules on giving enough space when overtaking cyclists.
- Detail on road positioning and riding two abreast, which aim to clarify a common source of conflict and confusion, even with roads police.

As [Cycling UK](#) explains, a hierarchy of road users would work as follows: “pedestrians, in particular children, older adults and disabled people, followed by cyclists, horse riders and motorcyclists. It wouldn't remove the need for all users to behave responsibly or give priority to pedestrians and cyclists in every situation, but it would ensure that their needs were considered first.”

Campaigners would prefer it to be called a “hierarchy of responsibility”, rather than risking the suggestion that some road users are more important than others, but it's good news nonetheless.

Until now, there was nothing explicit in the Highway Code saying motorists or motorcyclists should not left hook, or turn across a cyclist's path at a junction. The changes suggest just that, putting cyclists' rights at junctions on a par with those driving.

Proposed overtaking rules include that drivers should give cyclists 1.5-metre space if driving under 30mph and at least 2 metres if driving over 30mph, with larger vehicles required to give 2 metres at all times. Cyclists are explicitly permitted to filter through traffic, either on the right or left of slow-moving or stationary vehicles.

There could be [new “Dutch reach” rules](#) to encourage motorists to look before opening car doors into the path of cyclists, which can be fatal.

Cyclists would also explicitly be able to ride two abreast or more, and would no longer be advised to ride single file in some circumstances unless they felt safe doing so. As anyone who has ridden in a group knows, it is often far safer for everyone – including drivers – for riders to position themselves two abreast as [it reduces the time a passing driver needs to move into the opposite traffic lane](#). Cyclists are explicitly advised to ride in the centre of a traffic lane to make themselves as visible as possible, unless it is safe to move over.

“This is quite important,” says [Cycling UK](#)'s Duncan Dollimore, “because there are some roads police who believe you should ride 50cm from the gutter, and that you shouldn't be riding two abreast on a country road.”

Dollimore says the proposals would go a long way to making roads safer. “We all want separated cycle lanes and those announced are hugely important but at the moment we haven’t got the money that will enable that to be a complete network. They won’t be built overnight so there’s still a requirement to address driver behaviour, even if we do get a complete network in the future.”

He adds: “People’s behaviour isn’t going to change the next day, but this is relevant to my son who is learning to drive, because that is the Highway Code they will be asked to look at.”

Ultimately, we will see what comes out of the consultation, and from the spending review, to back up these grand proposals. According to the Cycling and Walking Alliance, and to the government’s own analysis, £6-8bn is needed over the next five years to double cycling levels – well above the £2bn committed by the government so far. However, this is being hailed as a real step change in its ambition for active travel and it appears Boris Johnson and his team believe in the proposals.

We know cycling and walking can help solve almost every major problem we face, from obesity to air pollution, congestion, injuries and deaths on the road. Thanks to a global pandemic, their true value has been highlighted, and our government must seize this opportunity to improve our roads.

- [The government’s consultation can be found here](#)