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To: [parking](#)
Subject: NEW PARKING PROPOSALS IN ESSENDON
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I have had the opportunity to examine the revised proposals for Essendon with regard to junction enforcement and the bus stop and wish to make the following comments:

PROTECTING THE BUS ROUTE

I have no objections to the new restrictions proposed for Essendon Hill in order protect and manage the bus stop. The bus service is essential for some of the residents and it ought to be protected as a service.

However, the plans relating to that part of the bus route passing along Church Street are deeply flawed.

The bus sometimes finds it difficult, and sometimes impossible, to negotiate the section of Church Street directly in front of the church's lych gate up to a point where the road begins to widen sufficiently to allow the bus free passage.

The only solution to this is to extend the double yellow lines from the war memorial along the WEST side of Church Street to a point just north of the lych gate. but for other reasons, which I will shortly outline, I believe they should stop short of the junction with West End Lane.

The imposition of double yellow lines on the WEST side of Church Street at the junction with West End Lane will do nothing to facilitate the bus, not least because the bus turns right not left. Under your current proposals, all that will happen is that people will be given licence to park beyond your proposed double yellow lines back towards the lych gate causing problems for the bus.

By and large, local residents know how much space the bus needs in order to get past, but many other people, i.e. casual visitors, such as walkers, tradesmen, visitors to other properties and those visiting or tending graves in the churchyard, etc. do not always take this into consideration simply because they fail to realise that Church Street is part of a bus route.

If the bus is to have any chance of negotiating the Essendon Triangle you cannot ignore the need to protect that part of Church Street closest to the lych gate.

Only by extending the double yellow lines along the WEST side of Church Street, from the war memorial to just beyond the lych gate, will you be able to provide clarity for motorists as to where, on that side of the road, they can and cannot park. By removing any temptation for motorists to park too close to the lych gate you will be helping the bus to negotiate Church Street free of obstruction along its entire length. Unless you do this you will be failing the bus company and the service it provides.

The bus also needs to have its route protected on the NORTH side of West End Lane at the junction with Church Street where it turns right. Your proposal to run double yellow lines from outside 'Eversleigh House' towards the junction with Essendon Hill would enable the bus to complete its journey around the Essendon Triangle. However, as far as the bus route is concerned, the double yellow lines need only extend from 'Eversleigh House' as far as the entrance to Orme Court. Once the road widens at that point the bus can carry on its journey unimpeded and free of any obstruction.

ALLOWING SPACE FOR PARKING AROUND THE CHURCH AND WEST END LANE

No part of your proposals to restrict parking in Church Street and West End Lane takes into account the acute need to accommodate those of us who live in that immediate locality and who do not have off-street parking.

Under your current proposals, the only concession to those of us without off-street parking is the EAST side of Church Street between the end of the proposed double yellow lines adjacent to the war memorial and the junction with West End Lane. This is insufficient and will cause huge distress to those of us who need cars to

support our lives in terms of work, leisure and access to vital services, none of which are provided within the village.

It is not unreasonable to calculate the demand for street parking on the basis of two cars per household. Essendon is in no way unusual or abnormal in this respect. Given that just about every provision of goods, services and leisure, not to mention work, lie beyond the village, most families and households require two cars. I know that national and local government would like to see a switch from private car ownership to greater use of public transport, but this doesn't help anyone living in a village with a very limited bus service such as the one that serves Essendon.

I cannot get a bus to visit friends who live in other villages in Hertfordshire because the bus links are either infrequent or inflexible. I cannot leave the village on Sundays unless I have access to private transport because the buses don't run that day. As for the rest of the week, I would have to be home indoors once the bus service stops, unless, of course, I have access to my own private transport.

The real measure of how vital it is to have a car in a village like Essendon is reflected in how few adults use the bus service. Whilst the bus allows for a basic 'existence', it confines those who rely on it to a very monotonous and limited lifestyle.

Essendon has been a living, thriving village for the 30 years that my wife and I have been resident there. It has also been a tolerant village, despite the fact that there has always been competition for parking near the church.

A number of categories of people need access to unregulated street parking in Church Street and West End Lane close to the church:

Firstly, there are the residents of Church Cottages, Church Street and some of the nearby cottages in West End Lane. Given that the seven dwellings that comprise Church Cottages were built at least 300 years ago, there is no built-in provision for off-street parking. The fact that they are Grade II listed means that there is no way their construction can be reconfigured to accommodate off-street parking. They are listed for a reason. They lie at the historic heart of the village. From a heritage point of view, those of us who own them are also their custodians. If the council wants people to live in them and look after them it has to accept that, by and large, it will always be people with cars, most likely two per household, who will own them. As such, those who live there will always need adequate street parking.

There is a strong conservation and sustainability issue here and the council does have a duty to respect that. Those of us who do not have access to garages or off-street parking are not asking for extra car parking spaces to be built or provided for us, but neither can we afford to see valuable street parking space reduced further.

Secondly, there are a number of cottages and dwellings in Church Street and West End Lane that have two cars, but only one off-street parking space. Does the council want to see more gardens adjacent to the church being dug up and paved over at the expense of the conservation area in which they sit? That might well be some people's response to a reduction in street parking brought on by the imposition of double yellow lines. Equally, there are several cottages that don't have this option. Whilst their gardens have been sacrificed, or partly sacrificed, to create one off-street parking space, the gardens are too small to increase that capacity. Any second car, or any visitor with a car, has to park on the street. A number of cottages fall into this category.

Thirdly, we all have to accommodate visitors and friends. Are we going to have to tell family and friends not to bother visiting us because street parking is so prohibitive it's just not worth the effort?

What about the tradesmen we all need to carry out work on our houses? Where do they park their vans, etc? Is a tradesman working for a week on a building in Church Street or West End Lane really expected to risk parking on double yellow lines and incurring parking fines? Which plumber, carpenter, builder, roofer, etc. would entertain that prospect? Much the housing stock nearest the church is some of the oldest in the village, which means that it needs constant vigilance and frequent maintenance. If you reduce existing street parking further you risk creating a group of residents from whom tradesmen will not want to accept work. Whilst they might want to take the job on, they are entitled to ask, "but where do I park?" Either that, or they will only undertake the job provided the customer is willing to pay the cost of any parking ticket.

Fourthly, there are the church services. Many of the congregation are elderly and some even live outside the village. The vicarage happens to be in the next village along, a few miles away, so even the local vicar has to drive to get here. All these people need to drive to and park close to the church. The ability to park close to the church is particularly important for the elderly and less mobile among the congregation, especially in the winter months.

The church also does much to support the social fabric of the village. There are fund-raising events, coffee

mornings, church meetings, as well as a well-developed programme of seasonal events. Does carol singing at Christmas, or a harvest festival, really feel the same if carried out in the local village hall rather than the church? The church also contributes to the national tradition of bell ringing, hosting both local ringers and visiting groups from outside the village. Many of these people need to drive and park close to the church. Where do they park?

Some years ago, the council granted the church planning permission to build an annexe in the churchyard, complete with kitchen and lavatory facilities. This was expressly so that church meetings, Sunday school and other events that require such facilities could take place at the church. Now, a new policy that seeks to reduce available parking space around the church threatens to make a nonsense of the original decision and rationale that brought about the annexe in the first place. Having created improved facilities for the church, it is absurd to restrict access to it by reducing the amount of street parking available for those who seek to use it, either now or in the future.

The church also needs regular maintenance, both minor and major. A few years ago the tower required extensive masonry work that went on for weeks. Skilled tradesmen had to drive and park close to the church to carry out this important heritage work. Not long ago, the church roof needed attention and repair. Again, where are these trades people expected to park? What about funeral directors who maintain and erect headstones, tree surgeons who need to trim the trees in the churchyard, as well as people who simply want to come and maintain family graves? Where do they park?

Finally, there are a couple of footpaths running close to the church in Essendon that are linked to a wider network of footpaths and bridleways. Local people make extensive use of these, but whilst we locals can leave our homes and enjoy this facility without resorting to a car journey, it is important to recognise that walkers from outside the village also use them and it is not uncommon to see such people parking by the church to begin their walk.

Few walkers want to walk the same old route time and time again, so it's hardly surprising that people from outside the village want to drive to Essendon and start their walk there. These people need somewhere to park too. The health benefits of walking in the countryside are widely acknowledged and are being actively encouraged, so is it really the council's intention to make walking around Essendon so unattractive to visitors?

Those of us who live at the heart of the village near the church have been willing to accommodate all kinds of activity by others who come and park up near our homes, but that goodwill and tolerance will be called into question if parking for residents becomes even more restricted owing to the presence of double yellow lines.

All in all, the new proposals to reduce the amount of unregulated street parking in this locality poses a real threat to all who have depended on street parking for decades and who will continue to depend on it as long as they live, work, exercise or worship here.

It is also worth noting that one of the few businesses operating from commercial premises in the village has recently been able to offer employment. The local forge has taken on two additional full-time workers and now also employs a part-time administrator. Whilst I welcome this, it does come at a cost. Those additional workers need to park somewhere and the nearest available parking is in Church Street, which further adds to the daytime pressure on parking on weekdays, and sometimes on Saturdays. This has almost certainly not been taken into account by the council when drafting its proposed plans to reduce parking space in the centre of the village.

For years, we have been able to absorb these pressures simply by applying common sense, tolerance and muddling through without excessive interference from local government. Now, under the new proposals, there is a real threat to the working life of this village. The council should be mindful of how this village, and others like it, need to operate and the many ways in which such locations are vastly different from towns. The new proposals ignore many of the realities faced by this village and threaten to disproportionately damage life for a good number of residents who live there.

People living in villages like Essendon will continue to need private transport if we are to avoid the worst aspects of social isolation, the like of which we saw during the height of lockdown last spring. Families with teenagers, and grown up children still living at home, often require access to a car. It is unreasonable to expect youngsters to confine their social lives to the village. No bus service can cater for their social needs, nor anyone's during the evening or on Sundays. Theatres, cinemas, restaurants and other leisure facilities need the custom of people who live in outlying villages and those same people deserve to have access to such cultural and social facilities. People in villages need cars and need space close to their homes where they can park those cars.

From an environmental point of view, the switch to electric cars will help to solve the issue of pollution but it will not reduce the number of cars required to service the needs of people living in rural areas. Everyone who owns a car needs somewhere to park it, whether it be on a private drive or in the street. That is a reality that the council needs to grasp.

For decades we have been able to use the flexibility afforded by single yellow lines. This facility is now going to be restricted to just a short stretch of West End Lane and nobody will be able to park on the single yellow lines until 7 pm. Anyone doing so will need to move the car by 7 am and park it....where?

Under existing rules, we have until 8 am to move cars from single yellows. By that time, some spaces are usually available, especially during the week when some people have already left home to commute, etc. Reluctantly.....very reluctantly, I am prepared to concede that the single yellow lines by the war memorial might have to become double yellows in order to facilitate the bus, but we certainly can't afford to lose the other spaces that are currently available at different times during the day, e.g. the two splayed junctions.

The single yellow line running between the junction of Church Street and West End Lane and Essendon Hill on the SOUTH side of West End Lane has provided a valuable overspill facility for overnight street parking.

Whilst I regret that the times are to be varied, i.e. reduced, I have to say that this overspill facility is hugely important and must be maintained. Anyone, local or otherwise, abusing the time restrictions should be subject to enforcement measures.

THE SPLAYED JUNCTIONS

The splayed junctions are the junctions of Church Street and West End Lane and West End Lane and Essendon Hill. Both curve outwards and are unusually wide compared with most other junctions in the village which tend to be squared off.

Where is the COMPELLING argument to impose double yellow lines at the two splayed junctions, namely Church Street and West End Lane and West End Lane and Essendon Hill?

The council asserts that it needs to protect these junctions, along with all the other junctions in the village where double yellow lines are now being proposed. It seeks to make that argument on the basis of road safety.

When this argument was put forward under the previous proposal twelve months ago, when the council was looking to impose an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order, the council was unable to provide evidence to support its claim that these junctions were unsafe. When I asked for accident statistics the council was unable to provide that evidence. It simply didn't have the evidence to back its argument

It did carry out some evidence gathering in relation to the bus stop on Essendon Hill, but not in relation to other junctions in the village. At the bus stop it identified a handful of what might be called 'near misses' caused by vehicles trying to overtake the bus, which was unable to use the lay-by owing to parked cars belonging to residents of Forge Cottages. It would appear that there are now plans afoot to enlarge the bus lay-by to accommodate the bus and some of the cars from Forge Cottages but not all. Having solved that hazard, one or two cars from Forge Cottages will now be forced to compete with residents in Church Street and West End Lane for parking space. This will add to existing pressures at both locations.

When it comes to junctions, however, the council is seeking to impose damaging changes without evidence to support its arguments. Junctions are not inherently dangerous, but they do demand a fair degree of care by motorists negotiating them. On the WEST side of Church Street at its junction with West End Lane there are 'Give Way' lines that force traffic to slow. The junction is splayed and wide offering decent vision in either direction. Provided that motorists give way the hazard in negotiating that junction is minimal. The imposition of double yellow lines here does little to improve safety. Vision to the right is unimpeded and vision to the left from the 'Give Way' line extends as far as 'Sherwoods' opposite what used to be the "Salisbury Crest". That is a distance of around sixty yards and applies even with a vehicle parked on the junction. The fact that we have been managing to park on this junction for decades and still negotiate it negates the argument for the council stepping in on the grounds of road safety.

The same arguments apply to the junction of West End Lane and Essendon Hill as apply to the junction of Church Street and West End Lane. The junction is controlled by 'Give Way' lines and provided motorists actually give way to traffic on the main road there is no safety issue, and certainly no great hazard involved. Again, visibility to the left is good owing to the splayed nature of the junction and visibility to the right from the Give Way lines extends as far as the bend in the road by the war memorial. All it requires is reasonable care and attention from motorists and the exercise of good judgement, which is a requirement on all motorists in all

situations. No special measures are necessary to protect this junction either.

In relation to the other junctions in the village that are now faced with the imposition of double yellow lines, it is important to remember that traffic speed at such junctions is low. Even where there are no 'Give Way' lines, traffic entering and exiting these junctions comes to a virtual stop, albeit temporary, before completing the turn. The hazards are therefore minimal.

Most accidents involve a fair degree of inattention on the part of motorists, poor judgement, or a combination of the both. Negotiating hazards, including parked hazards, forms part of the driving test. Parked vehicles, whether lawfully or unlawfully parked, can be negotiated safely with a bit of care and attention. The same applies to pedestrian traffic. At some point local and national government has to conclude that all road users have a duty to use their own judgement and common sense to resolve everyday problems, such as crossing minor and easily manageable roads.

It is clearly unlawful to park within 10 meters of a junction. That is the law as it currently stands in this country, but if the council wishes to be zealous in its enforcement of this particular piece of legislation, it must be prepared to apply that law evenly across the entire borough.

Of course, in practice what happens is that councils do not routinely regulate or enforce parking at every junction by the use of double yellow lines, especially in rural areas and villages. Whilst the police acknowledge the current law, they do not routinely enforce it unless the hazard is clearly and overwhelmingly dangerous or an accident has actually occurred where parking too close to the junction has been a significant contributory factor.

In practice, the real jeopardy for any motorist who risks parking within 10 meters of a junction is that an insurer might well choose not to pay out in the event of a vehicle parked at such a location being hit or contributing towards an accident. Indeed, the owner of the said vehicle might become personally liable for any damage or injury to other parties. Parking on a junction will always have that downside, but it does not form part of a council's duties to protect motorists from civil claims arising from such cases.

In the case of the junctions at Church Street and West End Lane and the junction of West End Lane and Essendon Hill, I would argue that the council has fulfilled its legal duty to protect road users by the simple imposition of 'Give Way' lines. These two junctions have not suddenly, after several decades, become more dangerous. Any claim to the contrary is not backed up by a sufficient body of evidence and rests purely on a 'theoretical' risk. Decades of experience actually refutes that 'theoretical' risk. If these junctions have suddenly become more dangerous where is the supporting evidence? The greater duty of care lies with the motorist, not the council. Junctions are not inherently dangerous, and that statement is certainly true in respect of these two junctions.

If these junctions were so unsafe they would have been the subject of concern decades ago, and yet the council has only seen fit to express its concern over the last twelve months. The concerns, and the arguments used by the council to support those concerns, i.e. improving road safety, are so general in nature as to appear spurious. It now seeks to impose severe restrictions on a community that has been looking after its own road safety simply by exercising good judgement and common sense. The council should not be seeking to interfere in this aspect of village life other than to provide clear and safe passage for the bus service.

The proposal to impose double yellow lines along the NORTH side of West End Lane is, I think, needed to allow the bus to negotiate the right turn from Church Street into West End Lane, but the double yellow lines need only extend east as far as the entrance to Orme Court. They do not need to extend beyond the entrance to Orme Court to the junction with Essendon Hill. The bus needs no further assistance once it gets to the entrance of Orme Court where the road widens. Any competent motorist should be able to manage this too.

FAIRNESS ACROSS THE BOROUGH

If the council insists on protecting every junction, as shown in the new proposals for Essendon, and seeks to support its argument for doing so on the grounds of road safety, it has to extend that argument to every such junction in the borough. Not to do so implies that Essendon is some kind of exception, and if so, the council has a duty to explain why junctions in Essendon pose a greater risk than anywhere else in the borough. To treat Essendon differently in this respect would be discriminatory, unfair and possibly subject to legal challenge.


By all means, control all junctions by double yellow lines, but let's be absolutely fair across the entire borough and impose them in every village at every junction. If the council does that it would demonstrate that Essendon

is not being singled out for special measures. What is the justification for targeting junctions in Essendon and leaving other villages untouched?

I would urge councillors voting on these measures not to give in to what appears to be a bureaucratic and administrative drive to impose them. This is not a matter that can be imposed by the administrative arm of local government. The character and nature of our villages, their preservation and ability to function as they always have done, is a political matter. There appears to be no compelling argument to change things here, though there are plenty of spurious ones.

I have made some constructive arguments and concessions with regard to the bus service. The fact that the obvious snag at the lych gate of the church has been overlooked in these new proposals suggests strongly that this whole scheme has been drawn up 'on paper' without due regard for realities and practicalities. If such schemes can be imposed on Essendon they can be imposed on other villages. For that reason, councillors in other parts of the borough ought to be very concerned.

Please also note, we sometimes hear cries from those with their own off-street parking that they have difficulty entering and exiting their drives owing to the presence of parked cars. But, please remember, there is a whole world of difference between somebody parking across someone's drive, effectively blocking it, as opposed to someone having to negotiate a turn slowly and carefully from their drive onto a road that just happens to be a little narrow. All motorists who use multi-storey car parks, or park anywhere that streets and parking spaces happen to be narrow, have to get in and out of confined spaces. Entering and exiting your own drive should pose no greater inconvenience or hazard than getting in and out of any parking space anywhere in the country. This is another spurious argument that you will hear. It will be presented by those who have off-street parking at the expense of their neighbours who do not. It is not for the council to arbitrate in favour of one type of resident to the detriment of others.


Church Cottages,
Essendon.