

Evidence ET-3:

The Impact of Gagle Brook Primary School Parking Requirements on the Appellant's Planning Application

This document has been prepared by Elmsbrook Traffic and Parking Group (ETPG), May 2023

for the Appeal regarding

LAND AT ELMSBROOK, BICESTER: PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Planning Inspectorate Ref.No. APP/C3105/W/23/3315849

Cherwell District Council Application No. 21/01630/OUT

Cherwell District Council Appeal No. 23/00062/NON

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Executive Summary

- A. OCC Highways and CDC Planning have previously recognised (in 2019 and 2020, respectively) that parking provision was never included for Gagle Brook Primary School. (This would use roadside parking on nearby roads as per OCC Highways school parking provision strategy.)
- B. ETPG and D. M. Mason Consulting have both predicted that, as a result of this, parked cars would stretch the length of Charlotte Avenue to well beyond the school. Since the maximum road width is 6.0 metres, this means this is “one-way flow with occasional passing points at junctions” – because 6.0m is not wide enough for roadside parking and two-way flow to fit.
- C. The purpose of this document is to demonstrate clearly, by simple diagrams and photographs, that one-way flow for almost all of Charlotte Avenue is not just words in a report – but is very clearly borne out by the reality for the school already in 2023.
- D. The history/background of ETPG's involvement with Gagle Brook Primary School's Travel Surveys and Traffic Surveys on Elmsbrook is described briefly first, along with the prediction models/calculations for the school's parking requirements (ETPG's model created in 2019).
- E. The latest update to the marked-up plan of Elmsbrook Phases 1-2 shows where cars currently park, and – as the school grows further to reach its full capacity (which is roughly double its 2023 pupil count) – where more parents/guardians will inevitably be using to park.
- F. Photographs then show the extent of the issue, as indicated on the marked-up plan.
- G. The VTP model assumes two-way flow throughout the length of Charlotte Avenue to connect to the proposed new 138 homes to use Accesses A and B: however, the evidence report produced by D. M. Mason Consulting (EH1, summarised in EH2) concludes that, with this significant length of one-way flow (NB: a factor repeatedly ignored by OCC Highways), the traffic impact would be “very probably severe.”

1.0 History/Background

- 1.1 Elmsbrook Traffic and Parking Group (ETPG) first provided support to the first Headmaster of Gagle Brook Primary School, Mr Alan Derry, in the Autumn of 2018 (the first term the school had been open). This was because the initial Travel Survey for the school had not been done to OCC requirements, and thus the Travel Plan for the school had not been signed off.
- 1.2 As OCC had sent a letter stating that they would take the school to court if it did not submit the Travel Plan including Travel Survey, as soon as possible, a consultant from ETPG assisted by undertaking the Travel Survey and analysis and completing the draft plan, and a second consultant, this time from CDC, assisted in reviewing it.
- 1.3 As part of the analysis, ETPG (who had been formed in March 2018, as a sub-group of the Elmsbrook Residents' Association) noticed that due to the limited drop-off spaces by the school, and the car park being intended for staff-only, there were insufficient spaces for pupils to be dropped off/collected without parking on roadsides.
- 1.4 (At that time, A2Dominion had already brought in Parking Enforcement on Charlotte Avenue throughout Phases 1-2; and there is only 1 Visitor space on Phase 2, and only 3 accessible Visitor spaces on Phase 1. Therefore, from "day one" of the school, parents/guardians travelling by car were all parking at risk of being fined. At that time, the school was populated by 80% non-Elmsbrook resident pupils, yet still managed only 56% of trips by car – NB: actually much better than Elmsbrook residents! – partly because parents strongly support the school's "One Planet" principles. ETPG worked with A2Dominion, and eventually, the enforcement company agreed (though not in writing!) to a 20-minute drop-off/collect leeway; however, there have been occasions when they have broken this, causing stress and hassle for parents/A2/Gagle Brook School, to get it rescinded.)
- 1.5 ETPG further noticed that when extra cars parked along the edge of Charlotte Avenue, it reduced the traffic here to one-way flow. This is because, with parking on one-side only and a maximum road width of 6.0 metres, there is insufficient space to two-way flow (as can be seen in e.g. Manual for Streets diagrams).
- 1.6 Recognising that the school was only 30 pupils when it opened in 2018, but was intended for 230 pupils, ETPG undertook an analysis of how the parking requirements would increase as the school grew, year on year.
- 1.7 This was first presented to the school, A2Dominion and residents in November 2018. It was then presented in more detail in January 2019 to members of OCC, CDC, the school's PTA, local councillors, and further A2Dominion staff.
- 1.8 It was presented again to OCC Highways, at their offices, in 2019. The OCC Highways response was to congratulate ETPG for producing this work: it was recognised that there had been an error in the planning for road widths on Elmsbrook Phase 1-2: the OCC Highways policy is not to provide drop-off spaces for schools, but to ensure roads immediately surrounding it are wide enough to allow roadside parking and two-way flow. OCC Highways stated that it was crucial that this problem was resolved "by the next planning application affecting this area" – because "this will be the last chance to solve the problem."
- 1.9 While the Covid-19 lockdown in Spring 2020 reduced traffic levels, they quickly returned to normal, and the Eco Business Centre (also built with a very limited number of spaces, much lower than trip generation targets suggested) contacted ETPG to ask for help.

- 1.10 The result was a presentation jointly by ETPG, the Eco Business Centre and Gagle Brook School (the then-Headmaster) in September 2020. By this time, ETPG had used three timepoints in 2018-19 to construct a model for parking requirements until the school is at full capacity. This model had proved correct for two later timepoints (January and September 2020, despite Covid affecting the latter).
- 1.11 Figure 1-1 shows the “state of play” in September 2020. The red and yellow rectangles show where cars were parking, at that time, along with using 3 of the 9 ‘blue rectangle’ spaces in the school’s staff car park (which are, as of 2023, now filled by staff only). The purple rectangles show where ETPG predicted in 2020 that parents would be parking in the next 1-2 school years, as the school continued to grow.

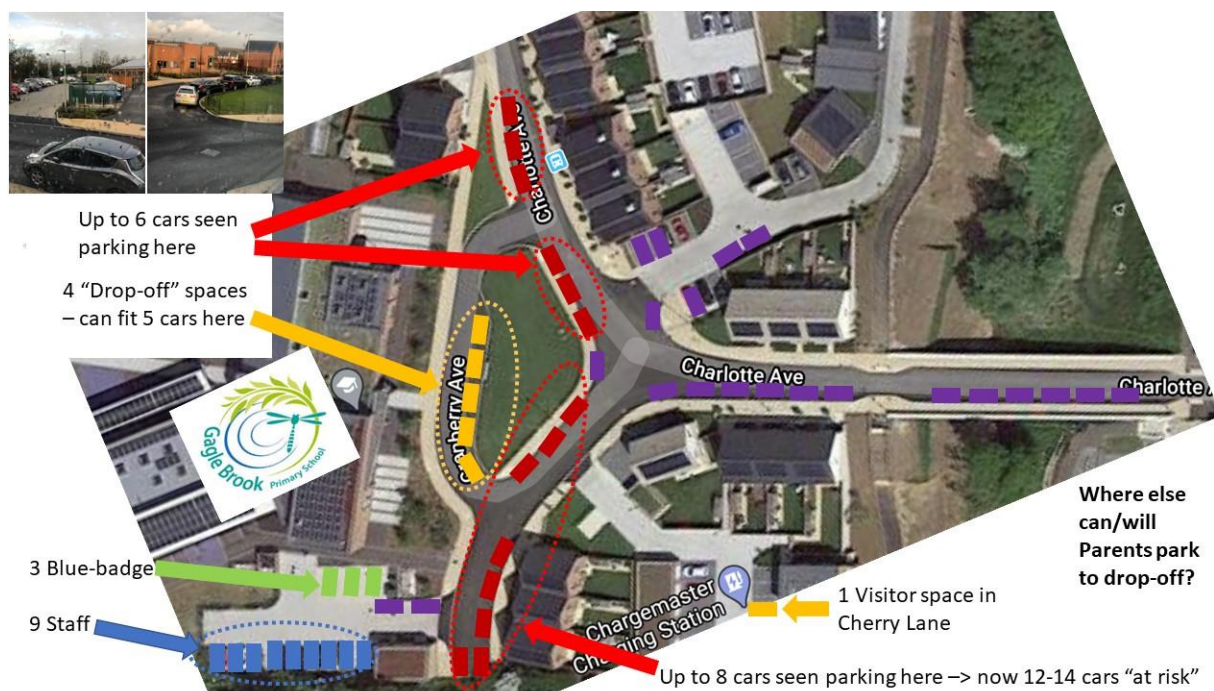


Figure 1-1: Version of powerpoint overlaid photo-diagram, as presented to CDC Planning on the 9th of September 2020, by representatives of Elmsbrook Traffic and Parking Group, Gagle Brook Primary School, and the Eco Business Centre.

- 1.12 At time of writing (May 2023), it is currently Term 5 of the 2022-23 School Year. Parking levels have continued to increase as predicted by the ETPG model. The school now has approximately 115 pupils, i.e. it is roughly half-full. ALL of the ‘purple rectangle spaces’ shown in Figure 1-1 are now filled every morning (08:15-08:45) and afternoon (15:05-15:35, approximately) by cars dropping off and collecting pupils – and typically a few more beyond the bridge on Phase 1, i.e. in front of where the Community Hub building stands (NB: no construction traffic is parking there, as work on the Hub has been paused for the past year).
- 1.13 The school demographic has gradually changed to have a much higher proportion of Elmsbrook-based pupils. However, the trip levels are not yet below 40%, despite Phase 4 being almost complete. This is because – even when Phase 4 is complete, and when the proposed Firethorn homes would also be completed and occupied – there are simply not

going to be as many as 230 pupils of ages 3-11 living within short commute distance of the school. There will always be families who send their children to other schools (e.g. private schools, or because they have teenage kids attending schools with their own primary schools, for example); and there will always be pupils coming because their parents want their children to attend a “One Planet” school, or prefer it to other local schools, or perhaps have moved away to another part of Bicester but don’t want to move their children.

- 1.14 This means that the requirement for drop-off and collect parking *will never go away entirely*, as argued by OCC Highways in comments for the Officer’s Report of 9 March 2023 (despite ETPG regularly engaging with OCC Highways on this point, for example in a video call on the 15th of September 2021, the OCC Highways officer acting on this application acknowledged the issue, but later ignored it/claimed it was not an issue; until another video meeting on 23 February 2023, when they finally acknowledged that it would not go away, and would cause a significant one-way flow problem, and required a ‘micro-simulation’ to determine the traffic impact on the B4100 junction and beyond – yet even then, they refused to make any changes to their report for the committee).
- 1.15 (Our local councillor, who also attended the meeting, noted after it that she believed this was entirely wrong, and that this and other questions still need to be resolved. Therefore, as a follow up, she wrote to a more senior officer within OCC Highways on ETPG’s behalf, to ask for a review and proper responses. Unfortunately, no reply was ever received to this).

2.0 Model Prediction of near future Gagle Brook School (GBS) parking space requirements

- 2.1 ETPG’s model predicts between 44 and 66 parking spaces required for the long-term future. This is based on the range of potential long-term future vehicle trips. The transport type modal share targets create the following requirements:
- (i) Original Transport Assessment for the Exemplar Phase: target 30% cars for GBS -> 230 pupils at 30% = 66 spaces. (NB: the resulting figures are less than a straight multiply, as observation and modelling allow for the earliest cars leaving before the latest cars arrive.)
 - (ii) GBS Travel Plan: target 25% cars -> 230 at 25% = 55 spaces.
 - (iii) GBS “aspirational target” 20% cars -> 230 at 20% = 44 spaces.
- 2.2 The independent traffic impact analysis report conducted by D. M. Mason Consulting (EH1) has concluded separately that around 46 spaces would be required to meet the 20% case; similar to the model prediction of 44 by ETPG. (D. M. Mason Consulting uses a different and simpler calculation method based on scaling of overlapping parked vehicle observations.)
- 2.3 D. M. Mason Consulting then note that, as a result, parked cars would stretch roughly the entire length of Charlotte Avenue. They conclude that without modelling the impact of this significant one-way flow – since the VTP model assumes two-way flow throughout the length of this road, to connect to the proposed new 138 homes to use Accesses A and B – that the traffic impact would be “very probably severe.”
- 2.4 The purpose of this document is to demonstrate clearly, by simple diagrams and photographs, that this analysis and conclusion is completely borne out by reality, in 2023.
- 2.5 *NB: there is no current possible “park and stride/walking bus” location in range of the school.*

- 2.6 The plan view of Elmsbrook Phases 1-2, shown in Figure 2-1, identifies where cars currently park, and where they could park in the future; and also where there is not space for them to park (e.g. due to road narrowings or other sources of parked cars).
- The area immediately surrounding the school contains 22 feasible spaces.
 - The current average number of cars parked is 32-34, up to 40 on dry days, and maximum counted recently of 43 on a wet day. The latter thus included all 3 'light blue rectangles' shown on Figure 2-1 to the east of the school, plus a few more parking in the Marketing Suite car park. (NB: That car park will soon be removed, and 2 new houses added there.)
 - The Eco Business Centre car park contains only reserved spaces for members; some of these also park along the sides of Bramley Avenue, Morello Close and Pippin Close – including the 3 accessible Visitor spaces in the latter, and 1 sometimes usable space on Morello Close. (NB: the Eco Business Centre is still not full, but meeting its 2017 target of 30% vehicle trips.)
 - For the total of 40 spaces currently in the 'light blue rectangles', 6 of these will be lost when construction resumes (imminently) on the Community Hub, and will not be possible once construction of the Local Centre starts, nor after it is completed.
 - The Community Hub-side spaces are for the 16 flats above this; the Local Centre-side spaces – of unknown number until the Local Centre is re-designed and built – will be for shoppers, and likely used as a promised overflow for residents' visitors and the Eco Business Centre.
 - GBS drop-off/collect will require a further 12 to 32 spaces, based on D. M. Mason Consulting and ETPG predictions. Using the length of Charlotte Avenue up to the B4100 would enable 18 more spaces; a possible 6 more are located further into Phase 2; one or two more may be possible on other side roads – however, these are sometimes used by the Eco Business Centre members, especially when the centre is holding an event with many visitors.
 - It can therefore be seen that, at a minimum, 80% of Charlotte Avenue will be "one-way flow with occasional crossing points at road junctions", between 08:15-08:45 weekdays.**

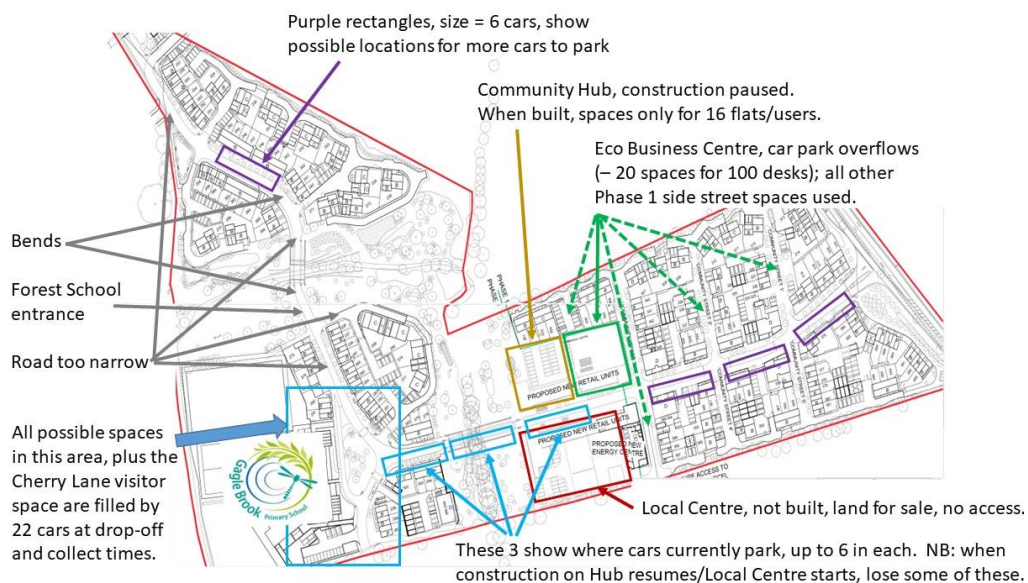


Figure 2-1: Marked-up plan view of Elmsbrook Phases 1-2, showing where additional parking spaces could and could not be located. **Charlotte Avenue space from GBS to the B4100 would all be used.**

3.0 Photographs showing drop-off/collect parking on Charlotte Avenue



Figure 3-1: Example Parking along the Phase 1-2 bridge: note that, often, only 5 cars can park on this stretch, in order to leave enough room for passing next to the “bottlenecks” at each end.



Figure 3-2: Example of parking in front of the school, and showing cars on the left side of Charlotte Avenue, each side of the junction with Cranberry Avenue.



Figure 3-3: Showing the end of a collection period, where cars are still parked further up, opposite the Community Hub and Eco Business Centre – it takes longer to walk back to there – and with the E1 Bus approaching to pick up waiting parents/children.



Figure 3-4: Showing that the Eco Business Centre park along Bramley Avenue (in fact, the entire length and all round the turning head of this cul-de-sac are typically tightly packed).



Figure 3-5: Occasionally, on rainy days, parking is already happening further along Charlotte Avenue, closer to the B4100 junction – here, in front of the blocks of flats.