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## Parking area with new footbridge over stream & footpath

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### Wroxton Lane, Horley

#### Site description:

The site is agricultural land on the southern edge of Horley village in a semi-rural setting. The field has an existing vehicular access on to the highway (Wroxton Lane) which can be found immediately adjacent to the west of the site, heading north towards the village centre. Open countryside extends to the east. To the north and west of the site are several established residential properties. The Old Forge caravan site is to the south, leading to the Thames Water sewage treatment works beyond. To the north of the site are two watercourses, a brook and former mill race and these streams flow under the highway and converge (forming a small peninsular of land) before joining Sor Brook some distance away to the east of the village. The site is generally bound by post and rail fencing with some painted metal railings found further along the lane. A barbed wire stock fence encloses the field.

#### Village parking issues:

Horley Parish Council have been seeking ways to alleviate parking concerns on Wroxton Lane which have developed significantly over recent times. A lack of off-street parking and additional demand has resulted in vehicles being parked along the narrow lane, causing damage to the previously attractive grass verges as shown in the photograph below:



*Image showing damage to the grass verge on Wroxton Lane caused by parked cars*

Wroxton Lane is narrow in parts and the extra pressure cause by double parked cars also affects the safe flow of traffic through the village, particularly with regards to the emergency services, farm tractors and delivery vehicles, as shown in the image below:



*Image showing intensive on-street parking causing difficulty for passing cars, delivery vans and emergency service vehicles.*

For example, in a recent incident a fire engine was despatched to attend a major fire in the nearby village of Hornton, attempted to travel via Wroxton Lane but could not get through due to the parked cars and had to turn round and make a detour.

### **The proposal:**

A small off-street parking facility for 8 vehicles is proposed on land adjacent to Wroxton Lane, serving the Old Council Houses and surrounding properties which do not benefit from private parking. This will relieve pressure on the narrow lane, ensuring that emergency vehicles can pass safely. It will also allow damaged grass verges to be reinstated. The proposal also includes a simple timber footbridge allowing users of the car park to cross the brook safely (see typical installation below), along with a new footpath running adjacent to Wroxton Lane, leading from the facility to the Old Council Houses. This will improve safety for pedestrians.



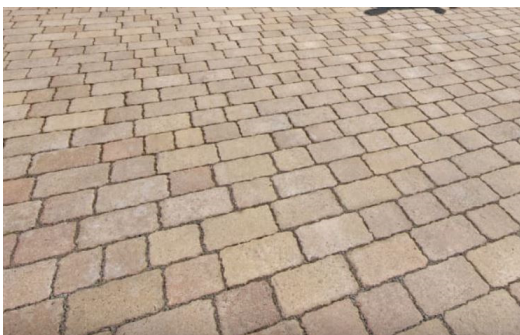
*Previous timber footbridge installation as a typical example*

### **Local community consultation & support:**

The Parish Council published an article in the February 2021 Village magazine outlining the proposal and requesting comments and indications of support for the scheme. Over 30 messages of support were received in response from village residents.

### **Conservation/heritage appraisal:**

The site is located on the southern extremity of the village conservation area. There are no listed buildings on or adjacent to the site. The site has been carefully selected by the Parish Council and the small car park has been designed to be as unintrusive as possible with parked vehicles largely screened from view by a new mixed native hedge along the highway, set back behind the grass verge. The parking and turning areas will be surfaced with a permeable block paver system laid in a traditional pattern to suit the village setting, such as the following:



*Typical block pavers*

To the rear and side, the car park will be enclosed with timber post and rail fencing. The painted metal railings found along Wroxton Lane are considered to make a positive contribution to the conservation area, referencing the former mill. These will be retained but slightly set back to allow for the new footpath, which will be surfaced to match the highway and delineated with stone or granite setts to match the surrounding area.

The general intention is to create a discreet, low visual impact parking facility such as those typically found serving country parks, woodland walks and rural picnic spots throughout the country.

Any potential impact of the scheme on the conservation area can be balanced favourably against the significant safety benefits off road parking would bring to village residents and the improved visual appearance that reduced on-street parking would create in this part of the village – of particular note allowing the grass verges to be recovered. This issue is acknowledged in the village Conservation Area Appraisal (p. 38):

*“Parking takes place on the roadside, particularly in Wroxton Lane, and this damages the grass verge.”*

### **Pre-application advice:**

Pre-application advice was received in June 2020 based on an earlier scheme. The planning officer acknowledged that reducing on-street parking would provide a clear community benefit and the proposals would be considered acceptable in respect of residential amenity. However, concerns were raised relating to:

- the impact on the conservation area;
- potential highways safety issues regarding the formation of a new vehicular access; and
- a lack of pedestrian connectivity with the village.

The submitted scheme has been revised to address these issues. Appropriate surface materials, boundary treatments and natural hedge screening have been selected to minimise any impact on the conservation area. The established field access from the highway will be upgraded rather than forming a new vehicular access. Parking spaces will be 2.5m x 5m with 6m manoeuvring space to ensure that cars can enter and leave the site in a forward manner. The revised layout ensures that the parking area is kept to a minimum (while remaining functional), ensuring that development in the field is limited. A pedestrian footpath has been shown connecting the village to the parking facility.

## **Conclusion**

This proposal to reduce on-street parking would provide clear and significant benefits to the local community and will result in a general improvement to the village conservation area by reducing the number of parked vehicles along Wroxton Lane. The visual impact of a dedicated parking area has been minimised by design and is outweighed by the clear advantages brought by the scheme.