

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date **28 September 2023**

Report of: **Director of Housing**

Subject: **Electric Vehicle Charging on Council owned land within the Housing portfolio**

SUMMARY

The purpose of the report is to inform Members of the approach to resident requests for electric vehicle charging on Council owned land within the Housing Department's portfolio.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Panel agree with the stance, acknowledging this may be reviewed as circumstances evolve.

INTRODUCTION

1. Housing in Fareham has traditionally been built surrounded by parcels of green space. This is especially true for the Council housing constructed in the 1960s and 1970s. These large areas of open space and verges are still in the ownership of the Council.
2. Over the years, car ownership has increased. This has resulted in parking becoming an issue in some areas of the borough. Many private and social rent homes do not have their own driveway or allocated space for their car.
3. As electric vehicles (EV) are becoming more popular, the Council is starting to receive requests for green spaces to be removed. This is to enable electric vehicles to be charged at home. This report sets out the challenges of accommodating households with these requests and provides potential solutions.

EV REQUIREMENTS

4. Depending on the make, an electric vehicle will, on average, need to be charged twice a week. At home, charging can be done through an EV point connected to the household's electricity supply. Alternatively, there are options for on street charging, such as bollard or lamppost points. On street options rely on the authority responsible for road maintenance to implement. In Fareham, this would be Hampshire County Council.

ISSUES TO ADDRESS

5. The Council recognises that the switch from petrol/diesel vehicles to electric is beneficial to the environment. However, allowing the removal of valuable greenspace to facilitate this is counter intuitive. The ecological impact would be negative and the approach illogical, especially given new planning biodiversity net gain¹ requirements.
6. Examples of where issues may occur can be seen in the following photographs. The properties are a mix of private and social housing, but the green spaces shown are solely Council owned:



¹ "Biodiversity net gain (BNG) is a way to contribute to the recovery of nature while developing land. It is making sure the habitat for wildlife is in a better state than it was before development. This will apply from November 2023 for developments in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, unless exempt." Department for Environment, F. & R.A. (2023) *Understanding Biodiversity Net Gain*, GOV.UK, Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/biodiversity-net-gain> (Accessed: 07/07/23).



7. There are also more logistical problems that would need to be addressed. Allowing a household to hard surface over green areas (even in part) would present the following difficulties:

- Co-ordination of hard surfaced areas would be needed to prevent random strips of access. This may mean larger grassed sections are lost earlier on.
- Loss of unallocated on-street provision as a space is removed to enable a dropped kerb/access point.
- Addressing surface water run-off, depending on permeability of surface material.
- Wider communication and neighbour consultation would be needed. Should neighbours object, we would need to have a strategy in place to decide next steps. All of which is additional officer time and resource.
- We would need to know how to stop any parties using the new access as further parking.
- When a resident moves out the next household may not have an electric vehicle. We cannot prevent them using the new access for their diesel/petrol vehicle.
- Any trees on the green may be affected, for example, repetitive driving on or near the roots will damage the tree.
- Posts or dragons' teeth may be required alongside any access to stop misuse on wider green.
- Setting a precedent that would make it hard to refuse others.
- There will be a financial burden on the HRA for ongoing maintenance of the area. Effectively, the social housing residents would be paying for works and upkeep.
- If the resident is private, they will need to seek appropriate permissions from HCC for dropped kerbs and they may need to consult our Planning and Asset Management Teams. This will be additional Housing Property time and resource, as will making sure the works are done correctly and of sufficient quality.
- There will be ongoing maintenance and repairs to the accessways as any new hard surfacing across our land will remain our responsibility.
- If the resident is a Fareham Housing customer, officer capacity and resource will need to be available to seek appropriate permissions, tender for works, then appoint and oversee works.

THE APPROACH

8. Hampshire County Council (HCC) is responsible for the maintenance of the majority of public roads in Fareham. They are currently trialling EV charging in problematic areas to help determine how residents can all charge their vehicles. This is expected to run for at least three years before results can be rolled out.
9. HCC has also released a guide² for residents wanting an electric vehicle. As Hampshire County Council is the accountable party for roads, this information should be followed ahead of any other instructions.
10. Taking into account the HCC guidance and EV trial projects, a solution for homeowners is starting to present itself. Given that a resolution is beginning to take place and the issues bullet pointed above, the Council cannot permit the loss of valuable greenspace to enable vehicular access.
11. Council tenants can request to have an electric charging point privately installed. Where there is off road parking, permission will be granted, subject to a certified electrical installer being used.
12. There are occasions when roads may not be adopted by HCC, or where service/parking areas are owned or managed by the Council. Although these could be suitable for consideration for parking points for electric vehicles, this would be a significant and costly project in its own right. The capacity of the wider electric infrastructure (i.e., sub-stations) would need to be considered, an appropriate charging regime for users, and wider community engagement. The resource and budget implications cannot be accommodated at this time. Awaiting the outcome of the HCC approach and understanding if it can help address the need, is considered to be a more sensible solution at this juncture.

RISK ASSESSMENT

13. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report.

CONCLUSION

14. Hampshire County Council are responsible for maintaining the adopted roads in Fareham. They have issued guidance for homeowners who wish to purchase an electric vehicle. They are also undertaking trials to understand how to charge an EV in more complicated situations.
15. The Council is awaiting HCC's approach to vehicle charging across the borough. Until this has been confirmed, the Council will not take any pre-emptive action that may also include removing valuable greenspace.

² <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/electric-vehicles/ev-charging-guidance>

Appendices: **None**

Background Papers: **None**

Reference Papers: **None**

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