

Parking on the Moorpool Estate

The Moorpool Estate was designed in the first decade of the 20th Century when there was little or no personal transport. As a result, the roads are narrow and winding and, while picturesque, are unsuited to the volume of traffic and the parking needs of today's residents.

This was acknowledged as a growing problem as far back as the 1970s when Harborne Tenants lodged an application to erect 35 lock-up garages on the Valley Site (Grainger Site A). They argued the need by saying:

This company is anxious to have these garages erected since there is now a demand for lock-up garages. I feel there is now an urgent need to keep vehicles off the roads of this Estate since they are very narrow and offer considerable traffic hazards particularly in Moorpool Avenue.

T.J.H.Scott
Manager of Works
23rd September 1975

This application was granted, with the Council Planning Departments of that time who commented

P.A. No. E/C/10306/21

Few of any of the houses within the Moorpool Conservation Area have been provided with garages. I feel there must be a considerable demand for garage accommodation for the applicants who wish to build this development in the first place. I feel that it is more important that the younger children living on the estate should play in their own gardens and that street parking, which constitutes in itself a pedestrian hazard, should be reduced as far as possible.

The situation has clearly not improved in the thirty years since that application.



Parking in Ravenhurst Road in the 1970s (left) and the same scene in 2007 (below)



Grainger's themselves acknowledge that there is an urgent issue in parking on the Estate, shown by their overnight parking survey (shown below) but even that is flawed because it was restricted to the boundaries of the Estate, when, in reality, residents' parking overflows into surrounding roads such as a Ravenhurst Road and Pereira Road which are outside the estate boundaries and were not included in their survey.



Garaging

There are three main blocks of lock-up garages on the estate, constructed mainly in the 1970s to relieve the pressure on-street parking difficulties. These are the Valley Site (Grainger Site A) with 94 garages. Ravenhurst Road (Grainger Site C) with 40 garages and the Builder's Yard (Grainger Site F) with 49 garages. There are also a number of smaller blocks around the Estate.

Many of these sites are in a poor state of repair. Grainger (and BPT before them) have pursued a policy of carrying out no repairs or essential maintenance on the sites and adopted an increasingly obstructive attitude to any new rentals. As a result of this, a spiral of disuse, neglect and minor vandalism has been perpetuated.

A recent survey of residents by the Moorpool Regeneration Group has shown that many of the garages are still used and that there is still a demand by residents for secure off-street parking if this was available in a safe and serviceable state. This survey, conducted in July 2007, showed that 29 garages were rented on the Valley Site, 23 garages on the Ravenhurst Road Site, and 14 garages on the Builders Yard Site. There were also a number of garages on smaller plots or on private land.

It is strongly felt that the use of off-street parking should be encouraged as a benefit to the community to relieve pressure on the surrounding streets and reduce safety hazards to the very young and very old that congestion brings, and the possible obstruction of roads for emergency vehicles, and that this parking should provide adequate security for vehicles and residents.



The garaging on the Valley Site (left) and Ravenhurst Road Site (below) are in a poor state of repair but still in active use



Grainger's figures for garage usage differ from those of this survey, showing 19 in use on the Valley Site, 23 on the Ravenhurst Road Site, and 28 on the Builder's Yard Site (this larger number may be explained by lettings to people living outside the estate boundaries). However, the definition which Grainger use for 'regular use' is unrealistic and we are aware of at least one case where a car kept in a garage is defined as 'storage' because it is not used every day, and another where the car that was usually kept in the garage was not present on the day of their spot inspection. There are no doubt many other examples. They also argue that garages rented to non-residents should be disregarded in their plans, but these cars will still need to park somewhere, presumably on surrounding streets. Their plans also rely on the assumption that residents living in the most congested streets (Moorpool Avenue and Margaret Grove and garaging cars they use 'regularly' will welcome the offer of a garage some considerable distance away as a practical alternative. Ironically, residents who use their cars less frequently are more likely to accept this alternative.

Grainger's proposals will remove the garage blocks on the Valley and Ravenhurst Road sites (134 garages) which it is proposed will be replaced with 11 garages and 7 parking spaces, exacerbating the parking situation on the estate. It is worth mentioning that a small number of the garages on these sites are privately owned and that Grainger plan to evict them with no compensation. The numbers being proposed are insufficient to support current usage, parking spaces do not offer the security which owners and their insurers require, and does not account for the unsatisfied demand from current residents.

Grainger's proposals for new housing will undoubtedly increase the burden of traffic and parking on the estate's road infrastructure. It is unrealistic to suppose that the type of properties proposed by Grainger will all have only the two cars per household accommodated within the plans, and these extra vehicles will need to be parked somewhere. It is also increasingly common practice for garages to be used for storage rather than the vehicles for which they were intended, causing further overspill parking. Their further suggestion that good local public transport links reduce the problem is misleading. The use of public transport, which should be encouraged, may reduce traffic density but, conversely, increases parking congestion.

There are currently 29 garages rented on the Valley Site and 23 on the Ravenhurst Road Site (Residents' Survey). Grainger are proposing only 11 garages and 7 parking spaces as a replacement, even though, in previous draft plans, they offered 53 parking spaces on these two sites, implying that they recognised the need for replacement parking. The current proposals are clearly insufficient and will inevitably lead to increased road congestion on the Estate

Conclusion

Grainger's proposals will increase the traffic and parking problems that already exist on the Moorpool Estate and, their proposals insufficiently address the issue.

Appendix 1: Parking on Moorpool Estate



Parking in Margaret Grove, and (right) some of the damage done to the grass verges.



And how it happens....



At the junction of Margaret Grove and Pereira Road (left), a local bus also adds to the damage



Moorpool Avenue (East Side)



Which also suffers from damage to grass verges



Moorpool Avenue (West Side) approaching the Circle



East Pathway

Carless Avenue

