

BACKGROUND

At the July meeting, Cllr Baker raised a resident concern about incursions of vehicles and caravans onto Parish Council land and requested consideration of measures to prevent or deter such activity. A resident repeated the concern and request at the September Council meeting.

The Operations Working Group agreed at the July meeting to consider the matter and bring recommendations to the Council meeting. The Working Group discussed the concerns, potential remedies, and their implications at its meeting on 18th September 2025.

SUMMARY

The Challenge:

When an incursion occurs it can take several days to complete the legal process for eviction, after which there is frequently a requirement to clean up the site of the rubbish left behind.

Residents and visitors who witness the incursion and the vans, vehicles and their occupants frequently feel vulnerable and frightened.

The occurrence of land incursions is not merely local: it is a national problem and the determination of those engaging in such activity was evidenced locally during the summer when the substantial gates of Victoria Park, Salisbury were damaged to facilitate ingress. Appendix A, below, also lists some of the more extreme examples that have occurred nationally during this summer.

The potential sites for incursions onto Parish Council owned land are as follows (perimeter distance in metres) with a combined total of approximately 1500 metres.

- Boundary Road (84m)
- Hartley Way (125m)
- Hampton Park Green (549m)
- Norman Drive (432m)
- St Lukes (44m)
- St Peters (109m)
- Whitebridge (81m)

Remedies:

The two most frequently used remedies are bank and ditch (a shallow ditch with the excavated soil banked outside the ditch); and ‘dragon’s teeth’ (wooden or concrete posts approximately one metre apart around the perimeter). The advantages and disadvantages of each method are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Remedies Compared

	Bank and Ditch	Dragon’s Teeth
Advantages	• Blocks vehicles without moving parts. • Cost-efficient (uses site soil). • Green, biodiverse, vandal-resistant.	• Strong deterrent against vehicles. • Low maintenance once installed. • Durable, compact, and effective in small spaces.

	• Flexible around trees and site features.	
Disadvantages	• Higher maintenance (grass cutting, litter, silting). • Drainage and stagnant water issues possible. • Trip/fall risk; may deter accessibility. • Some residents see it as “defensive” or unattractive.	• Higher cost (materials + installation). • Visually stark/hard appearance. • Trip hazard for pedestrians/mobility users. • Awkward for grounds teams to mow around

Indicative costs for a perimeter of 125 metres are, for bank and ditch, £8,700, and for dragon’s teeth, £8,422. Open Parish boundaries extend to approximately 1500m which equates to at least £100,000 in costs to implement this solution across the Parish estate. To help put such expenditure in perspective, this sum is greater than the Parish Council Capital Budget for 2025-2026.

Considerations:

The Operations Working Group reflected upon the following considerations:

If we opt for one of the two remedies:

- The action may be welcomed by some because they will feel re-assured
- It may be criticised by some as not enough to prevent incursions
- Some may raise complaints about the hazards created for access by some people
- Some may raise complaints about the visual impact spoiling the beauty of the place

If we select a test site, some may complain about ‘two-tier’ treatment or the problem being displaced to another site.

If the remedy proves ineffective, what further options exist?

We have a responsibility to spend public money wisely.

CONCLUSIONS

The Operations Working Group concluded that, in the light of the experience at Victoria Park, Salisbury and the examples listed in Appendix A, that neither of the potential remedies gave us sufficient confidence that it would deter anyone with simple tools or equipment, from overcoming the barrier, and therefore the cost of implementing either remedy could not be justified.

The Working Group is aware that Wiltshire Council, The Police and Crime Commissioner, and other local councils are not ignoring the problem and are considering options for more efficient and effective responses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Operations Working Group recommends the Council does not pursue the installation of physical barriers, but instead seeks to liaise with other agencies on more efficient and effective interventions.

Appendix A: Land Incursion Examples 2025

Lee Gate, Buckinghamshire

Rural field was levelled by diggers and pitches for five caravans and one static mobile home were created without planning permission during the last bank holiday weekend in May

Hagley, Worcestershire

More than a dozen trucks arrived at the site from 3.30am on Good Friday to level it and put gravel across it. Fences were also installed alongside a small children's play area. About a dozen caravans are there now

Felmersham, Bedfordshire

Work began on the evening of Friday, April 11 and continued through the weekend which saw a field levelled and plots for 11 mobile homes and four caravans installed

Weston, Nottinghamshire

A large caravan site - with tarmac roads, fences, and 40 pitches - was constructed on land between Egmanton and Weston over the Easter bank holiday weekend, with work beginning on Good Friday

Balderton, Nottinghamshire

Work started on May 6 after the VE Day bank holiday to convert a field into a traveller site in Bullpit Road, without permission. The field was gravelled and 10 pitches created before an enforcement letter was served to stop the works, on May 8

Charles, North Devon

A rural field near the hamlet of Charles, in north Devon, was ripped up and levelled, with gravel spread across it on June 2, as part of an unauthorised development by travellers. Pictured is the field on Tuesday, June 3

Petworth, West Sussex

Builders arrived on Friday, May 2 during the bank holiday weekend for VE Day, with diggers levelling a field without permission in the rural South Downs National Park in West Sussex before seven caravans moved onto it

Burtonwood, Cheshire

Bulldozers, excavators and HGVs moved onto the plot on the outskirts of Burtonwood, Cheshire, and started the unauthorised work over the bank holiday weekend on May 23. Within 72 hours, the six-acre field had been transformed into a gravel car park

Ringwood Road, Burley, New Forest

A small pony field in the heart of the New Forest was converted without permission into a traveller plot complete with hardstanding for two static caravans, two touring caravans, parking, bin and cycle stores, e-bike charging points and boundary fencing in May