

Dear Michelle,

Thank you for your email and all the time and energy you have put into the parking problems in Otford. It has also taken up a great deal of mine too and I am only dealing with one issue in the district!

I have taken up your suggestion and joined forces with Warham Road residents association and have already met with their representative Sarah Fenn. We are writing to update you, as requested, on the impact of the parking charges on Warham Road and the Parade.

The village car parking charges have apparently had a very positive effect on trade in the High Street, but unfortunately they have had a less desirable impact elsewhere in the village. The combined impact of the parking charges and the parking restrictions in the Bubblestone area (Bubblestone Road, The Butts, The Old Walk, Well Road and Sidney Gardens) have had a detrimental effect on those areas without parking restrictions, in particular Warham Road and Sevenoaks Road. The situation is no longer tenable and has now become dangerous; we have sadly already had our first accident involving three vehicles on Sevenoaks Road near the Warham Road junction. When SDC introduced the parking restrictions in the Bubblestone area the parking charges were not in force and clearly no one envisaged the knock on effect these charges would have on the village. It is now imperative that urgent action is taken in the following roads.

Warham Road

On the very day the parking charges went live in the village Warham Road was bumper to bumper with all-day parking on both sides of the road. As a result, there is now nowhere for visitors to Warham Road to park and residents, many of whom are elderly and infirm, regularly find themselves blocked in by parked vehicles. The vehicles are frequently poorly and inconsiderately parked making it difficult for residents, or other vehicles, to get through, as clearly demonstrated by the attached photos. A fire engine was recently unable to respond to a 999 call due to the poor parking on both sides of the road. It will not be long before there is a more serious consequence to the all-day parking. Warham Road is now the only residential road left in the centre of the village not to have parking restrictions and as such has become targeted by those seeking free all-day parking. As the last residential road left standing the introduction of parking restrictions here would not move the problem elsewhere as was the case following the piecemeal introduction of restrictions in Tudor Drive, then Bubblestone Road, The Butts, Well Road and so on.

As you know from the meeting you attended on 29th July 2013 Warham Road obtained a formal response from all 38 properties in Warham Road concerning parking enforcement and achieved a consensus from 76% of the residents. By contrast Bubblestone Road only had a 55% consensus. As documented in the Parking Meeting minutes of 31st July you kindly confirmed that SDC had added Warham Road to the parking enforcement waiting list and that a formal submission concerning the final proposal would be requested approximately 18 months later in early 2015.

Following your advice, it was also agreed that Warham Road would align with the parking restrictions in the Bubblestone area to keep monitoring for Traffic Officers to a minimum. It was only through your email of 31st October 2014 that Warham Road learnt that they had been moved to the bottom

of the parking enforcement waiting list putting their case back 18 months to two years, apparently due to the amount of time already spent in Otford.

Warham Road have had to put up with an awful lot from SDC over the last few years with the extension of the Primary school in their backyard and resulting trucks, lorries and earthwork's vehicles using Warham Road for several months. Now they have become the free village car park for shop workers, local business, teaching staff and commuters from early morning to early evening. At a recent Parking Meeting the view of Warham Road residents was reassessed. All were still in agreement with the proposals put forward in July 2013 and agreed that parking enforcement was now urgent as the all-day parking had got out of control following the parking charges. Contrary to local myth, the residents of Warham Road are in agreement on parking enforcement and are ready to go ahead with the formal submission that was promised for the New Year.

The Parade

I have written many emails to the Parish Council and SDC regarding the parking problems for Parade workers caused by the restricted parking in the Bubblestone area. Rather than finding a permanent solution to these problems, SDC advised the Parade staff to park in Warham Road and Sevenoaks Road where there are no parking restrictions.

Following the introduction of the parking charges, these roads are no longer available for parking as they are now full of parked vehicles long before Parade staff arrive for work. The single yellow lines in the Bubblestone area are now also a target since the charging and are taken early by those who are able to re-park their vehicles throughout the day according to the waiting times. Parade staff and other local businesses now have nowhere practical to park. The commuters may have moved on to pastures new, but the Bubblestone area is still full of parked vehicles throughout the day and it is difficult to see what the residents in this area have gained by the introduction of the yellow lines.

What is clear, however, is that the parking restrictions and parking charges have created more problems than they have solved especially for the small businesses on the Parade who provide a vital service to the village. Trade in the High Street has apparently improved since the parking charges, but the same cannot be said for the businesses on the Parade who are struggling. Whilst commuters are having the last laugh finding every available free parking space, the village is in danger of losing essential services, such as the post office, provided by the Parade of shops.

The section of unrestricted road you refer to on Bubblestone, which apparently was left unpainted by SDC for the Parade, is also taken by commuters long before Parade workers arrive for work. Without a notice making it clear that this section of the road is intended for the Parade there is no point leaving it without parking restrictions only for commuters to benefit. I did mention this to Andy Bracey in my email, but I have not received a reply to this point.

A simple, quick and inexpensive solution to the problem for Parade workers would be to alter the waiting times in the Bubblestone area. I have already made this suggestion in a previous email to Andy Bracey, but he was not happy with the proposed times put forward. The Parade workers have reviewed these times and would now like to propose that the waiting times on one side of the roads in the Bubblestone area are altered from 9am to 10am to 8am to 9am. This slight change would still deter commuters, but would also provide a practical alternative to staff having to re-park throughout the day according the waiting times to avoid parking tickets.

For your information, Parade workers are not interested in parking permits for the parking spaces on the Parade as there would be nowhere for customers to park. They would, however, like the unrestricted road left for them ear marked in some way so that they and their customers can make use of it rather than the space being taken by early birds seeking free parking.

To compound the parking problems of the village the car dealership Beadles, due to expansion, have told their staff to find parking elsewhere and are now parking in Sevenoaks Road, Warham Road and anywhere else they can find free parking.

Holmesdale and Bubblestone Farm Cottage Entrance

Another impact of the charging and the subsequent all-day parking on Sevenoaks Road is the difficult and dangerous situation that has now been created for the residents of the above properties trying to exit onto Sevenoaks Road. I understand that a solution has been put forward to SDC to introduce double yellow lines opposite the entrance.

Whilst parking charges were necessary in the village car park they have exacerbated an already difficult situation in the above roads. The only sensible way forward now is for an urgent review to be carried out and an assessment made based on the priority of the other villages ahead of Otford in the queue for parking enforcement. It would not be unreasonable for the other villages to have to wait a little longer for their issues to be addressed if an assessment was made based on urgency and fairness which we hope would bring Otford to the top of the pile.

Summary of Urgent Action

- 1 Change restricted waiting time on one side of the roads in the Bubblestone area to 8am to 9am.
- 2 Delineation and enforcement of unrestricted parking area in Bubblestone Road for the Parade.
- 3 Parking restrictions for Warham Road to mirror those in the Bubblestone area.
- 4 Double yellow lines opposite the entrance to Holmesdale and Bubblestone Farm.

The above parking enforcement requests would not cause problems elsewhere in the village and would make an enormous difference to the current parking nightmare and safety concerns for Warham Road, the Parade and the village.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

Irene Roy

Chairman – Otford & Shoreham Conservative Branch