

## **PUBLIC CONSULTATION COMMENTS RECEIVED**

### **Comments 1 – the Westerham Town Council**

Westerham Town Council strongly objects to the changes to the car parking charges in Westerham and the failure to include the free 15 minute “pop & shop”. WTC feels the changes are unconstitutional. Option 5 was voted for by the general public with an unusually high response and the lack of the free 15 minutes, combined with such high increases in the short term centre tariffs (50% compared with the 10% across rest of district) means that there is no benefit to the local residents.

WTC fully supports the Westerham Town Partnership in their response to this consultation and the complete Option 5 package that was presented to SDC.

Westerham Town Council

---

### **Comments 2 – the Westerham Town Partnership**

The Westerham Town Partnership is concerned with supporting the town's economy and quality of the life for residents, visitors and businesses. We are keen to adopt a holistic overview approach.

We are mindful of the Planning Permission recently granted for Charman's Farm development into a Winery, Brewery & Farm Shop and the detailed plans for marketing it, in London inter alia, together with the National Trust, Chartwell and Quebec House, as a Visitor Destination. This, in addition to our existing tourist numbers and the recent development of 5 new junior football pitches, without extra parking, has/will put our facilities under considerable strain.

Representatives of the town including the Partnership and the Council have been talking to Charman's Farm and the National Trust with a view to supporting their developments, and making sure the town can share in, and cope with, the results. The Parking Report is just one resultant document.

The Westerham Town Partnership is pleased that Cabinet has considered its Report. It has gone to some extraordinary lengths and effort to work with SDC, resisting Press pressure, communicating in an open and honest manner. After an initial severe problem we thought we had found a working relationship. In our Report we had gone to considerable trouble to ensure that our proposals enhanced SDC coffers: however the quid pro quo had to be that our economy was supported. In the Consultation, Option 5 was voted on by a very significant response but it has not been adopted. This does not seem democratic and makes a mockery of the consultation.

It is completely unacceptable to grab a 50% increase in charges from the centre and to balance it with a free 3 hours in the Darenth Car-park which costs the SDC nothing of significance, and in practice is not available at peak times because of space shortage (until rectified)

**Residents:** It is important to retain voters' goodwill. The proposed town centre rises are in the order of about 50%, and can only be acceptable if offered with the concession of free 15 minutes. Certainly locals will be deterred from considering the centre as a shopping destination without the concession. It is otherwise very difficult to justify such large hikes without the sweetener of a 'pop & shop' facility. For residents, we need to be able to demonstrate a return/reason for such large increases. From the marketing point of view the justification needs to be accompanied by a headline free 15 minute sweetener.

We also hope that the substantial projected rise in revenue from Westerham will be reinvested into extending the Darenth car-park, and improving the shabby lighting and signage. Furthermore we hope that CEOs will be retrained into Ambassadors of the town (whilst still carrying out their function). We have already had a meeting with SDC Officers to detail concerns at the east end of the town surrounding the Darenth car-park.

**Tourists & Business:** Marketing Westerham as a destination: as things stand we will not be able to advertise any parking enticement to visit the town, save for the 3 hours free in the car park which we think may encourage the dual spend visitor. But the success of this is dependent on expanding the Darent car park, since spaces are already full much of the time. The plans for this are only at embryonic stage, and we cannot advertise this until we have something to offer. The effect on SDC revenue of 3 hours free is negligible.

We would also like to use the 'pop & shop gift' (which does not affect SDC coffers at all) as a marketing tool in order to attract visitors. We expect very few of these will use the free concession, and advertising this will ultimately increase the spend in the centre parking meters. Without it, we have no adequate headline with which to attract shoppers to the centre.

The current proposals seem like a very short term decision, which we think will have the result of showing SDC to be milking Westerham, strangling its economy, making life harder for its residents, and discouraging short term tourist visits. The Town Partnership objects strongly to the exclusion of 15 minutes 'pop and shop' and would be grateful if this were reconsidered: otherwise we object to any change in the Traffic Order.

Westerham Town Partnership

---

### **Comments 3 – the Westerham Society**

You will recall that I had submitted a letter on behalf of the Westerham Society with regard to the proposed parking charge changes in Westerham.

I now enclose a further letter and strongly request that our very valid concerns are addressed before any final decisions are made.

As you are aware, the Westerham Society is a very long established heritage and community group focused on the history and future development of Westerham. We work very closely with the Westerham Town Council, the Westerham Town Partnership and the National Trust, along with many other groups and individuals.

We are very disappointed that SDC appear to be ignoring the direct wishes of all the above bodies and, more importantly, the democratically chosen choice (Option 5) of the residents.

Specifically, we believe that the 15-minute 'pop and shop' amendment is key to the future strength and viability of Westerham as a retail option for the residents. The agreed 3 hour free period in the Darenth car park has no relevance to the requested 15 minutes in the town centre. The two needs are for entirely different users as has been expressed, most comprehensively, by the Westerham Town Partnership (WTP). Again, we would like to go on record as fully supporting their concerns and demands as outlined in their recent letter to SDC, dated 4<sup>th</sup> February 2014.

Chairman

---

#### **Comments 4**

I object to the imposition of a charge for a 15 minute "pop & shop" facility - this is detrimental to our retailers and to residents and not what was promised by the SDC.

---

#### **Comments 5**

I believe there have been consultations re parking in Westerham with input from Westerham Town Partnership.

Just to say that I would support the council's proposals for a minimal charge (10p or 15p) for 15 minutes pop and shop because in practice it makes it much easier to find a quick parking space.

---

#### **Comments 6**

I am writing to demonstrate my objection to the new proposed parking charges in Westerham. I live about 4 miles as the crow flies from Westerham, and therefore this small town is my local centre. I park there at least 2-3 times each week, either to visit the bank, to pick up a few groceries or on longer visits to peruse the myriad of small individual sole trader shops to be found. The availability of parking spaces near to the shops can be a problem at times. It is vital for the survival of a busy and thriving town centre to have cheap and available parking spots to use for short visits.

I have seen the havoc that heavy handed parking charges can reap on a commercial centre first hand. I work in both nearby Sevenoaks, and Oxted, and the different parking policies are very apparent. In Sevenoaks in Kent there is little shop side parking to facilitate quick in and out visits to run errands. This forces the traffic into the larger car parks which are fed by one way traffic which takes much longer to filter in and out. The charges are also high. Blighs Car park which is nearest to the high street is 70p for 30 mins. If you wish to call in quickly to drop some shoes off at the menders or pay a cheque into the bank it is a real consideration if you have to add on at least 70p to each transaction.

However In Oxted being in Surrey the charges are completely different. Firstly there are many available shop side parking bays to facilitate quick errands running up both sides of the high street offering free parking for 30 mins. Finding a space is usually possible as cars are always coming and going. There is a large car park behind the high street which also offers free parking for up to four hours but a ticket is required. This policy has resulted in Oxted remaining a vibrant and busy commercial hub throughout the darkest days of the recent recession.

In contrast the expensive parking in Sevenoaks has resulted in a severe drop in footfall to the high street in recent years and thus has meant there have been many empty shop premises which are becoming harder and harder to rent out.

In light of my personal observations. I would urge the town council to think very carefully about the proposed parking fee structure. In my opinion it would be most effective to have free parking in and around the town centre for up to 30 minutes, and free parking in the Darenth Valley car park for all day parking. This would help the workers coming into the town. Then charge a reasonable fee, say (£1.00 for each hour) for longer stays in the bays located just off the high street. This would be paid by tourists and visitors to the town who expect to pay something to park, but do not want to leave feeling they have been 'fleeced'. It is much more conducive to repeat visits if good value for money is to be found. Cheap and reasonable parking could be used as a 'Unique Selling Point' for the town as a whole in its bid to become a destination stop.

---

### **Comments 7**

I received your letter outlining the new parking charges. This is one response that will not be complaining about the new prices.

My concern, as a new "season ticket holder" is availability. I commute at varying times and obviously later trips can mean no spaces remain at Bradbourne.

If you make Buckhurst 2 a long stay only car park I suspect the other car parks will get more shorter term parking.

Paying the second highest fee and running out of spaces earlier seems a poor deal.

I know you had audits done, what did they tell the Council about parking habits?

---

### **Comments 8**

Travelling to London as a part timer (mum of 2 children under 5) is expensive enough ... And I do it to keep my career going...!

So adding even a slight extra cost is something I do object to. All costs add up! And, as an annual subscriber to bay \*\* in sennocke you are already benefiting from my and others advance payment in the bank!

I appreciate the year on year things do or can change but the train companies have frankly wrung us out to dry over the last 8 years since I've lived here (almost double the cost now to travel in to London in rush hour!)

I feel a heavy sigh as I'm convinced that my views will probably count for nothing :-)

---

### **Comments 9**

I write regarding the proposed increase from £5.30 to £5.50 in daily parking charges, in Ashley Road and St Botolph's Road Sevenoaks.

In recent months, daily commuters have been filling the parking bays in Ashley Road from ever earlier hours. The average utilisation of the parking bays by all-day parking is increasing, and use of the bays during the day by residents and their visitors is becoming correspondingly more challenging. Over the longer period, the situation is progressively worsening. The ability for anybody to "convenience park", for visiting or shopping locally, for a few hours is in gradual decline.

It turns out that the reasons for this are:-

- the Station car park charge is now £6.70 per day, a premium of more than 20% over the future street parking charge, and about 25% premium over today's street charge.
- the gap between the street parking price and the station parking price is getting larger as the years go by.

The natural consequence of this is that the Street bays are filling up before the organised car park at the station. I cannot imagine that this balance is in line with the town parking strategy. The balance is moving the wrong way, and against the interest of the tax paying residents of the area, who have to live with it day to day.

My request is therefore obvious. The correct policy should be to move the full day tariff for parking in Ashley Road, so that it is just above the Station car park full day charge and that each year the policy direction is to keep it that way.

---

### **Comments 10**

My wife and I wholeheartedly agree with Mr \*\*\*\* recent letter to you on the above subject. We too have noticed a distinct shift in parking practice in this cluster of cul-de-sac roads, with the result that early in the morning a significant proportion of the available parking in St Botolphs and our roads are taken by commuters to London. You too must be aware of this.

Not all of us are able to accommodate our visitors cars, especially should we have fund-raising events and children's parties for example.

Have you considered the advantages of a Multi-story car park? Built for instance on the old (compulsorily purchased) Farmers pub site by the station. It has been derelict and a

dreadful eyesore for years now, and a disgraceful waste of valuable space. At least this would demonstrate that the Council was taking action at last.

---

### **Comments 11**

I am writing regarding the proposed increase in daily parking charges in St. Botolph's Road and Ashley Road. As residents of Ashley Close, we have noticed over the last few months a big increase in the volume of cars parking all day in all the 3 roads off St. Botolph's Road: namely Ashley Road, Ashley Close and Chestnut Lane. This of course denies access for short-term visitors, including those needing to get to the Amherst Medical Practice, whose car park is often full.

An immediate solution to the problem of commuters occupying all the parking spaces would be to align the charges for parking in the station car park, or even making the charges for parking in these roads higher than the station car park.

A possible long-term solution might be to put on 2 floors of parking space above the station car park opposite the Shell Garage, using the money paid by B.T. when they were granted planning permission for building their monstrous office block on the old market site. We were told at the time that this money was to be used to improve local traffic problems and as far as I can tell it was only used for the traffic signalling system outside the station.

Creation of these two extra levels of parking should not cause offence to the local environment and would help to relieve the pressure on parking in the local roads near the station.

I await your reply with interest.

---

### **Comments 12 – Kent Police**

Kent Police have no specific observations to make regarding these proposals.

---