

Ryarsh Lane Allotment Society,

Ryarsh Lane,

West Malling,

Kent. ME19 6QP.

[REDACTED]

31st March 2022

Dear Sir/Madam,

We write with regard to the proposed car parking charges to the Ryarsh Lane Business Car Park in West Malling. This is a matter that has only recently come to our attention; but which has caused concern for many members of the Allotment Society, due to the adverse impact it will have upon them.

Could you please explain how you have publicised these proposed charges? It seems that bar one or two of us, most people had absolutely no idea and this is despite regular reading of the Kent Messenger and Downs Mail and the regular leaflets through the door from the Liberal Democrat Party. As a result, we feel that we have not been able to put forward our views before a Consultation and describe the negative impact.

As a Society, we have canvassed opinion and had many replies. I am adding some of the responses below, as emailed to me, in the RLAS member's own words ...

" Most weekends I have to use this car park as I can never find a residents parking bay on Saturdays. As a resident of West Malling this seems very unfair, and unreasonable and would cost an awful lot of money over the year. What a ridiculous way to help local businesses stay afloat in these testing times, customers will abandon the need to visit West Malling if they have to pay to park! This is an essential amenity in West Malling, for businesses and residents. West Malling is beautiful place, of historical importance and an envy of a lot of towns. Let's hope someone with sense is listening! "

"Yes, I do use the long stay car park – it's an absolute Godsend because, as we all know, Ryarsh Lane is a nightmare, assuming that you can even get a parking space there. And a charge of £4.50 seems to be excessive, bordering on greed. What with no public loos, the loss of a number of public parking spaces in the Tesco car park, and extortionate parking rates in the long stay car park, TMBC seem determined to make West Malling as unattractive to visitors as possible!"

"I live close enough to walk but I do think allotment holders should NOT be charged for parking. "

"We use the business car park after 3pm weekdays and at the weekend. A charge for its use is clearly a way for the council to grab additional income. Simply no other reason although in sure the council will try to dress it up some other way!"

"Yes I do sometimes use the car park when I am bringing things to or from the allotment that would be awkward to carry. I sometimes need to load the car with garden rubbish that cant be composted, to take to the dump. I live in a flat with no garden so dont have a garden bin. I also might park there if I have decided to drive down to the plot when i need to visit to collect produce and the weather isn't good or dropping by on my way home from work."

"We don't use the car park but are naturally opposed to any parking charges. You can add our names to any objections raised."

" We think it's terrible about the proposed car parking charges. This will not help West Malling at all. Not everyone will be able to afford such charges and this will then impact the pleasure of renting an allotment. It has long been documented that loneliness is a growing issue in the UK and we are becoming more aware on a daily basis that we also have a parallel mental health Pandemic. It is very well known that the benefits of working an allotment help mind, body and soul heal from stress and trauma and can provide much needed socialisation. Why would TMBC wish to add fuel to an already very toxic fire? Food poverty, excessive fuel hikes, ever increasing energy bills! And now this, money that we literally cannot afford. We implore TMBC not to implement these charges. Basically, what is being proposed may seem like a small change of no real significance to TMBC - but to us it may just be the straw which breaks the camel's back! "

"Regarding the car park, I do sometimes have to use it - I live very close to the Bull Inn Pub on Town Hill and have a parking permit for the roads close by, but often can't park there as the spaces are all taken by visitors, so I have to use the car park. Sadly I suspect parking fees in the car park would make it worse :("

The above are just some of the responses I've received. As you can tell, these proposed charges strike very deep for some people. I hope that these views be heard as part of any Consultation process.

Looking forward to your earliest response,

Yours Faithfully,

 on behalf of the RLAS.