

**From:** [Karen Bell](#)  
**To:** [Andy Bracey](#)  
**Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL SENDER]On and off-street parking restrictions - Changes to parking restrictions in the Borough of Tonbridge & Malling  
**Date:** 05 January 2024 09:51:59

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Dear Andy

Further to my email below, the councils Planning and Transport Committee met yesterday and on the same basis as our objections to the changes to the on and off-street parking restrictions proposed for West Malling decided that Kings Hill Parish Council would also object to the proposals for Ditton and Larkfield.

I would be grateful if the councils' additional comments can be considered.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

Karen Bell  
Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer  
Kings Hill Parish Council  
Kings Hill Community Centre  
70 Gibson Drive  
West Malling  
Kent  
ME19 4LG  
Tel: 01732 870382 / [REDACTED]  
[www.kingshillparish.gov.uk](http://www.kingshillparish.gov.uk)

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**From:** Karen Bell  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 19, 2023 2:10 PM  
**To:** Andy Bracey <[Andy.Bracey@tmbc.gov.uk](mailto:Andy.Bracey@tmbc.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL SENDER]On and off-street parking restrictions - Changes to parking restrictions in the Borough of Tonbridge & Malling

Dear Andy

Kings Hill Parish Council has considered the proposed changes to the on and off-street parking restrictions and the changes to parking restrictions with the borough of T & M.

Please be advised that Kings Hill Parish Council objects to the proposals on the grounds that the retail and

services in West Malling provide a main amenity centre for Kings Hill resident and any impact upon them will adversely affect the residents of Kings Hill.

I would be grateful if these comments could be considered in the future consideration of this issue.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]  
Karen Bell  
Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer  
Kings Hill Parish Council  
Kings Hill Community Centre  
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**From:** Committee Services <[committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk](mailto:committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk)>

**Sent:** Thursday, November 23, 2023 9:48 AM

**Cc:** Andy Bracey <[Andy.Bracey@tmbc.gov.uk](mailto:Andy.Bracey@tmbc.gov.uk)>

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL SENDER]On and off-street parking restrictions - Changes to parking restrictions in the Borough of Tonbridge & Malling

**For the attention of TMBC Members, Parish Council Clerks and KCC Members for Tonbridge and Malling**

**Sent on behalf of Andy Bracey, Parking Manager, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council**

Dear Councillors

### **On and off-street parking restrictions**

#### **Changes to parking restrictions in the Borough of Tonbridge & Malling.**

The Borough Council is in the process of reviewing its on and off-street parking arrangements, and to this end is consulting on changes to both its on and off-street parking Traffic Regulation Orders. The consultation opens on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> November.

This requires a change to the Council's parking Traffic Regulation Orders, and with this in mind

we are now consulting on the changes to those Orders.

Copies of both on and off-street Notices of intention to make the Orders are attached.

Due to the size of the documents, the proposed plans, both Statements of Reasons and the draft Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) can be viewed on the Borough Council's website [www.tmbc.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.tmbc.gov.uk/consultations), however, paper copies of the proposals are available on request.

Additionally, all of the consultation documents are available 'on deposit' and may be inspected during normal working hours at the following locations, however, staff at those locations may not be able to answer technical queries.

Tonbridge & Malling BC Offices Gibson Drive Kings Hill West Malling Kent ME19 4LZ	Tonbridge & Malling BC Offices Tonbridge Castle Castle Street Tonbridge Kent TN9 1BG	Kent County Council Sessions House County Hall Maidstone Kent ME14 1XQ
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I should be grateful to receive any comments in writing by 7<sup>th</sup> January 2024 so that the issue can be reported back to, and considered by Members to inform their views. If there is no response, I shall assume you have no objections.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

Andy Bracey FIHE  
Parking Manager  
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

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# WEST MALLING PARISH COUNCIL

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Email: [clerk@westmallingspc.org](mailto:clerk@westmallingspc.org)

Website: [www.westmallingspc.org](http://www.westmallingspc.org)

Clerk to the Parish Council: Mrs Claire Christmas

The Parking Office  
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council  
Gibson Building  
Gibson Drive  
Kings Hill  
ME19 4LZ

6<sup>th</sup> January 2024

## West Malling Parish Council response to TMBC Parking Consultation January 2024

Councillor Matt Boughton confirmed at a Chamber of Commerce meeting that TMBC needs to raise an additional £50k of annual revenue in our area. West Malling Parish Council prides itself on being open and constructive in our dealings with the Borough and will assist, where possible, with achieving this while requesting that the concerns and views of our residents, business owners and visitors to our town are given due consideration.

As a means of raising additional income, the Council would suggest that TMBC only increases the parking charges in the car park behind Tesco with a view to seeing how much additional income this would generate. Not only would this produce an immediate source of additional income, but there would be savings from the considerable infrastructure costs needed for the other proposals within these consultations. There would also be the cost saving of not needing to employ additional traffic wardens to monitor the proposed new designated areas.

### Introduction of off-street parking charges – Ryarsh Lane car park

West Malling Parish Council is **strongly against** the introduction of any parking charges for the Ryarsh Lane car park other than the present business permits. We also do not wish to see the extension of parking charges to 8pm. This will have a serious impact on all the side roads where the parking restrictions end at 6pm. Residents returning from work, or from an evening out will be unable to find anywhere to park. It will also impact on all the early cafe, pub and restaurant trade pushing people to make later bookings and increase noise and disturbance into the night or to find alternative locations where parking is easier.

This car park is also essential for the thriving monthly Farmers Market which has an excellent reputation. The free car park is used by both stall holders and market goers and because it is free on Sundays draws in visitors from all around the area. Should these parking charges be introduced then we could see the number of stall holders and visitors reduce and the market close.

Nearby allotment holders are also regular users of the car park dropping off heavy bags and equipment.

The consultation document does not make it clear whether residents of Ryarsh Lane, with parking permits, will be covered for 24/7 parking. This section of the consultation document does not open properly on some devices.

## **Introduction of on-street parking charges – West Malling High Street and Swan Street**

The Council is **strongly opposed** to the introduction of charges for these areas.

The Parish Council believes that there is only a small number of cars that park in the High Street and Swan Street one-hour bays for longer than is permitted. We agree that this is a concern and would like to work with the Borough to alleviate this.

Local businesses, shops, pubs, restaurants, cafes, West Malling CE Primary School, and St Mary's Church will all be affected in different ways, a business may have fewer clients, shops lose footfall, people may spend less in pubs and eateries. The longer-term knock-on effect could be profound. For example, fewer users of Tesco supermarket may mean that they withdraw from the town. This would lead to a complete downgrading of the town's viability and a reduction in the chargeable business rates.

The environmental impact of these changes cannot be overstated. Residents use the 1-hour free parking in the High Street to shop in Tesco. Shopping is heavy and awkward to carry. If they must pay for their hour then they will drive to Lunsford Park, Larkfield where parking is free, or to Kings Hill. This will have an environmental impact on the borough and increase poor air quality. TMBC should be encouraging people to shop as locally as possible, and this was particularly necessary during Covid. The first free hour is also essential for people visiting both the church, and churchyard, throughout the week and school drop off and pick up times. We ask that if charges are introduced then it is important that the 1 hour free remains.

We ask that TMBC take into consideration that West Malling is within a Conservation Area and that any alterations to the town need to be carefully considered. The introduction of numerous paying machines & information display signs around the town will detract significantly from the historic attributes that currently make West Malling an attractive place to live and visit. We also ask that TMBC take into consideration previous work undertaken to de-clutter the High Street so as to create an inviting area for residents and visitors alike; WMPC have previously agreed with TMBC a Design Statement to ensure only high quality coordinated street furniture is installed.

Both TMBC and West Malling Parish Council have a duty to consider all changes and how they will affect disabled, less well-off, older visitors and residents. Anything that restricts people with mobility issues (not just blue badge holders) from getting from A to B is detrimental to their wellbeing. Getting from your car and finding a machine can be no straight forward task. The ability to use the parking app particularly in an area which is renowned for poor mobile reception is a serious concern. We stress, for ease of use, that should the Pay & Display machines be introduced then they must be able to take cash and debit cards. The increased cost of an outing is a huge disincentive for those who struggle economically. For those disadvantaged, these worries lead to a loss of confidence and living a more restricted life. It is known that this can have a dramatic effect on people's mental health.

Visitors to the town are needed to keep West Malling as the vibrant and attractive place it is to shop and enjoy hospitality. West Malling should be welcoming and accessible to all ... regardless of their means. Mary Portas said, 'town halls ignore at their peril the risk of driving trade out of the high street to shopping malls ...' also stressing that parking charges risk undermining the vitality of the high street.

### **Alteration to the loading bay outside Tesco, West Malling**

West Malling Parish Council agrees with this part of the proposal as it agrees that the current parking arrangement can present danger to road users. We ask TMBC to be mindful of the loss of parking bays this would cause. The Council believes that this is another reason that the one-hour free parking remains for the rest of the High Street and Swan Street.

### **Increase to on-street parking charges**

Residents parking permits - West Malling Parish Council agrees with this part of the proposal.

Residents parking permits, non-UK registered vehicle - West Malling Parish Council agrees with this part of the proposal.

Visitor 24-hour vouchers - West Malling Parish Council agrees with this part of the proposal.

### **Increase to off-street parking charges**

Business parking permit - We would ask TMBC to investigate making this more equitable and efficient. Presently there are far too many spaces not being used.

In conclusion we are asking TMBC to take a holistic look at the impact of these proposals and not just the impact to parking, but on the fabric of the town and the lives of the people who live and visit here. We agree with the sentiment of the present Government's Levelling up strategy ...**creating opportunities for everyone across the UK by improving jobs, pay and living standards, making streets safer, protecting health, and wellbeing & investing in high streets and town centres.**

The Parish Council would welcome a meeting with TMBC to work towards achieving the Borough's goals. We are both concerned and perplexed by the confusing consultation documentation on TMBC's website. Residents are understandably annoyed and upset by the seemingly, if unintended, lack of clarity and are left with a belief that their views are not genuinely sought. Working together, both TMBC and West Malling would be stronger and better placed for having a healthy and prosperous future.

Yours faithfully,



Claire Christmas  
Clerk to West Malling Parish Council

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Parking Consultations](#)  
**Subject:** The Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (Off-Street Parking Places) ORDER 2023 No.2  
**Date:** 06 January 2024 09:22:30

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Dear Ms Beilby,

My name is [REDACTED] and I am the Pastor at Hillsong Church Kent on Medway Wharf Road in Tonbridge. Firstly I'd like to say thank you for the work that you and your team do, thank you also for welcoming comments and suggestions regarding the proposals affecting Council car parks in Tonbridge town centre.

Having carefully read the proposals and also the factors that have prompted them I understand the explanation given and the need for meeting the rising cost of operating the car parks.

At Hillsong Church Kent we have a congregation that is based not only in Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks but also a considerable amount of people who travel from Maidstone and the Medway towns. We currently have two services on a Sunday as well as various midweek activities and meetings, for example a Youth group that runs on Friday evenings. At our Sunday services we regularly have on average over 600 people coming to Church and in order to be considerate neighbours and a caring presence in our community we give clear instruction for people to park in the Council car parks (Particularly the Sovereign Way and Botany car parks). As the parking is currently free on a Sunday and Tonbridge has many amazing spaces for recreation and eating out we have seen that when people come to the town centre for Church they frequently then visit the high street for food and shopping as well as the monthly Farmers Market too. We love being part of the Tonbridge community and seeing that also on weekends there are often community events, such as the Dragon Boat race and food festivals which our congregation frequently both attend and support once Church has finished on a Sunday morning.

We understand the need set out in the Council's proposals for extra revenue and parking spaces in the town and we would like to suggest that on Sundays and Bank Holidays that there could be either a reduced rate for parking or fixed charge for the day (for example £2). This would generate extra income from the car parks that are used by our congregation and also encourage people to stay in Tonbridge after the morning services so they can eat lunch on the high street, visit one of the parks and support community events like the Farmer's Market and Castlemas.

We strongly feel that if parking is charged by the hour at the proposed rates then people would likely leave the area once Church has finished and indeed they may have to make the decision to attend Church with less frequency due to the financial pressures that many in our community are facing.

I'd like to thank you for taking the time to read through our suggestions and would welcome being part of any further discussion. My contact number is [REDACTED] and I would be happy to talk further and answer any questions you may have regarding this matter or any other concerning Hillsong Church Kent.

Yours Sincerely

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Kent Location Pastor | Hillsong Church UK

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Parking Consultations](#)  
**Subject:** Parking Consultation  
**Date:** 06 January 2024 09:05:51

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Dear Sir/Madam

As Minister of West Malling Baptist Church, I just wanted to write a note sharing my strong concerns and opposition to the parking charge proposals which impact Saturdays and Sundays in West Malling.

As a Church in this community, we bring together approximately 80 people of all ages to Worship on a Sunday which significantly provides a place of connection and fellowship. Some are elderly and struggle with mobility and accessibility and so arriving at Church in Swan Street is valuable but not easy. Additional parking charges will have not only a financial impact on them but a social one too.

We have folk who come to us who are really struggling with the cost of living crisis. We support them with money budgeting courses and life skills courses. We have a hugely important midweek Coffee Morning which is a vital community event. We house a Men's retirement group. These are not insignificant events that take place and will be negatively impacted by these proposed changes.

We are making, I believe, a significant contribution to community life within this borough to those vulnerable and on the margins. These proposals in my opinion will make life harder for those who attend. It could have an isolating effect.

I believe we are not the only faith community in West Malling who would equally be impacted by these proposals. The presence of Churches in West Malling draws people into the Town which is good for the businesses too. There are 'knock on' effects.

One thing that COVID taught us was the importance of community. Community was stripped away through safety measures and social distancing. People suffered through isolation and most prominently the vulnerable and those on the margins. After restrictions were lifted people were looking for that community which had been stripped from them. We have seen an increase of people coming to West Malling Baptist Church. I believe that is in part because of the community, friendship and belonging it provides. My point is, why as a Borough Council would you take a step that negatively impacts and could have a stripping back effect on community once again? I believe part of your role is to build community not to chip away at it.

If I can assist, as a community Leader, in any way please do let me know.

Many thanks,  
God bless

[REDACTED]

Minister of West Malling Baptist Church  
Swan Street  
West Malling

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**West Malling Baptist Church**  
**Swan St, West Malling. ME19 6LW**  
www.wmbc.org.uk  
Registered Charity no. 1130977



**Secretary**  
**Janice Webb**  
Email: secretary@wmbc.org.uk

3<sup>rd</sup> January 2024

**RE: Parking Consultation**

I am writing on behalf of the Trustees of West Malling Baptist Church in regard to the proposal to extend car park charging in West Malling and introduce meter charging on the High St and Swan St.

Although we are not a business, as a local church we do serve the community through the week and at the weekend. Here is a typical week:

Monday: Popin - free warm space in the day time

Wednesday: Charity Coffee Morning - free

CAP money courses in the evening for anyone struggling with finances or on the verge of being in debt or cost of living - free

Table Tennis

Thursday: Morning and evening gatherings for the church

Saturday: Messy Church for families

Sunday: Morning Worship

It might come as a surprise how much we do as a church through the week to support the lonely, families, elderly, etc. These events are for the community and provide a much needed place for folk to meet and socialise. We make no charge for the services we provide and are run by volunteers who either walk in or park in West Malling. The impact of increasing days on parking charges would be detrimental to the many volunteers who give at least 4 hours to run each of these gatherings. Our church does not have a car park so our volunteers already use the car parks in the daytime, but we are concerned that taking away free parking in the evening, on a Sunday and bank Holidays will have a very negative effect.

As the bus service is now so poor, volunteers and our Sunday congregation (75% living outside of West Malling) are given no choice but to travel to their local Baptist Church by car. Typically on a Sunday morning we have church members arriving from 9.30am to prepare the church etc. ready for 10.45am service. Because we believe fellowship is so important we provide refreshment after the service and therefore this may mean, on a typical Sunday, parking from 9.30am to 12.45pm (3 half hrs) and the shortest time being 10.15am (2 half hrs) through to 12.45pm. We also hold shared lunches following the service which again would extend that time and these would have to stop

should the proposals go through.

As part of Church Together in Malling we support united afternoon services and the West Malling Good Friday procession. Again these occasions would be penalised by charging on a Sunday and Bank Holiday. This event is supported by 150 to 200 local Christians from our surrounding churches and would probably be impacted by charging on Sunday's and Bank Holidays.

The impact of introducing meter charges on Swan St will make it more difficult for those who may have a blue badge, and as a church we obviously have funeral and wedding services from time to time. Would this mean the funeral hearse and wedding cars being charged for parking outside the church during the service?

We would ask that car parking charges remain as they are and in particular not to introduce charges for Sunday and Bank Holidays as a matter of respecting those coming into West Malling, so that they may freely gather for Sunday Worship without the distraction and worry of having to walk out of a service because their car parking time has expired.

Yours sincerely



Church Secretary and Trustee

West Malling Baptist Church

**From:** [Head Teacher](#)  
**To:** [Parking Consultations](#)  
**Subject:** Objection to TMBC parking charges in West Malling  
**Date:** 07 January 2024 20:34:29

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I am the Headteacher of West Malling CE Primary School and The McGinty Speech and Language SRP and am writing on behalf of the school to formally object to the proposed parking charges in the High Street and Swan Street.

From a school perspective I am very concerned about the impact charges on the High Street will have on the amount of parking in local residential roads. Parents park on the High Street at both ends of the school day to either walk the short distance to the school, or drop their children off for the Walking Bus scheme. The inability to do this will force parents to try to find parking on West Street, Offham Road and Norman Road. This will cause huge disruption to the school's neighbours and has the potential to cause access issues to residents' properties if parents park inconsiderately. The small amount of free parking available immediately outside the school next to the Old Cricket Ground will become even more congested than it already is. This area should provide a convenient place for parents to park at both ends of the school day, but is already congested and this congestion will only become worse under the planned changes.

From a wider perspective I am also concerned at the impact of the planned charging regime on the local business community. These businesses have had to survive the negative impact of the COVID pandemic and are reliant on local and passing trade. The High Street is a traditional English High Street, full of independent traders and eateries, and the Parish Council have worked hard to maintain this ethos and feel. The introduction of parking charges will seriously harm this local trade. People will instead choose to travel to out-of-town centres such as Aylesford or Kings Hill, where they will be able to park for free to access large, national superstores. There is an additional environmental consideration here, as people use their cars to travel further to these out-of-town outlets.

The proposals are a direct contradiction of TMBC's own Economic Development Strategy for 2023-2027, which states the Council is investing in our local economy to help residents and businesses and foster sustainable growth. The proposed parking charges would do neither. Residents who are in possession of one or more vehicles will be subject to increased financial burden due to parking permits. This could cause the most vulnerable to become isolated from friends and family due to the increased parking costs to not only themselves but to their visitors.

I recognise that the Council is hard-pressed financially, and looking to raise additional funds. I believe that some form of parking charge on the High Street and Swan Street would be appropriate, but not the current proposals as these significantly undermine local residents and businesses. Instead, I would propose an initial period of free parking for up to 2 hours, with charges starting after this point. This period of grace would mitigate the concerns of the school, help local residents and assist local businesses by maintaining local and passing trade.

I am aware that one of the Council's concerns is the 'clogging up' of the High Street and

Swan Street by people parking for the whole day, and potentially commuting to work by rail. Introducing a higher rate of charge from the 2-hour point onwards would prevent this situation from taking place while still providing the Council with an income from those people who do wish to park for longer.

I would ask TMBC to give serious consideration to these objections and reconsider their current proposals.

Kind regards,



Headteacher

West Malling CE Primary School and The McGinty Speech and Language Centre  
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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Parking Consultations](#)  
**Cc:** [Matt Boughton](#); [Tom Tugendhat MP](#); [Russell Meader](#)  
**Subject:** On-Street Parking Charges 2023 - West Malling High Street & Swan Street  
**Date:** 06 January 2024 11:22:04

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To whom it may concern;

I'm writing on behalf of West Malling Chamber of Commerce with regard to the proposal to alter the car parking restrictions in West Malling.

Having attended the initial consultation meeting of councillors and a subsequent meeting with Councillor Matt Boughton, West Malling Chamber of Commerce have the following concerns.

When the proposals were discussed at the initial consultation, it appeared that no consideration was given to individual town requirements and that a standard parking scheme should be adopted in the councils streets and car parks in their ward. This one size fits all approach is extremely draconian with no consideration to the size of town, set-up or amenities. West Malling's main trading area comprises of two streets, both formed of small independent businesses. We do not have a large store, like other local towns, to attract the high volume of visitors required to warrant paying parking charges from 8am - 8pm 365 days of the year.

The key driving point on the consultation is to deter all-day parking offenders, however, introducing on-street parking charges from 8am - 8pm for 365 days of the year to deter a potential dozen offenders, is like using a sledgehammer to crack a nut. The blanket charges for 12 hours a day and every single day of the year is an extreme proposal to implement with a new untested scheme. Why is it not inline with the main car park (Tesco) of free after 5.30pm excluding Sundays and Bank Holidays. The introduction of these charges is guaranteed to discourage visitors to the High Street of West Malling. This statement is backed by the business owner's conversations with their customers, in addition to surveys and reviews conducted by independent professionals such as the Mary Portas review into the future of our High Streets, funded by the Conservative Party in 2011, which all point to the same conclusion.

Following the announcement of the public consultation, the business owners in West Malling have been asking their customers for their response to the on-street parking charges and the response has been a resounding, they would no longer shop in West Malling out of principle and inconvenience. Charging on the High Street and Swan Street will add an additional level of stress to the experience plus they feel aggrieved to pay to visit their local High Street. Instead they will use local alternatives such as Kings Hill and Bluewater who both offer free parking.

West Malling has an amazing collection of independent entrepreneurial small businesses that rely solely on footfall to drive their profitability. They cannot fall back on online presence and delivery service that many chains can afford. They heavily rely on the pop in customer who will visit two or three businesses during their free hour parking slot. The on-street parking charges 7 days a week 8am - 8pm will destroy that vital business feed, a period of free parking will still allow the majority of transactions to take place.

The suggestion by TMBC that "when parking charges were applied to the Tesco car park, no businesses were affected" is just speculation as no consultation has ever taken place to prove this. On the contrary, we put it to you that all businesses in West Malling have been



adversely affected by this change and removing free parking completely would be devastating for many if not all.

Another concern of the Chamber members, that TMBC are fully aware of, is the appalling phone signal in West Malling, the businesses in West Malling already have customers complaining they are unable to get a signal to pay the parking charges in the car parks and end up logging on to their business wifi to do so. Therefore a smartphone parking meter system will not work, an alternative system would need to be provided for non smartphone users too.

On the subject of parking meters, the Chamber members are also concerned of the negative visual impact of the parking meters on the Medieval centre of West Malling, the historic core, including High Street and Swan Street that sit within the Conservation Area. Justifiably there are many restrictions applied to properties that are located within the Conservation Area. What considerations and discussions have taken place with the department of conservation on the location and aesthetics of the parking meters and their blight on our beautiful market town?

We think most businesses would agree that some degree of parking control is required as the minority should not be allowed to abuse the few parking spaces that exist. More visits by the parking wardens would discourage this offence and would increase revenue by issuing more parking tickets to regularly offenders. An additional revenue stream that should be explored is the Ryarsh Car Park business permits. Business owners in West Malling have been trying to highlight, inform and illustrate with photographic evidence the large amount of parking spaces that are available every day in this car park. This has been ongoing for a few years following COVID and people moving to working from home so no longer requiring their parking space plus the closure of Malling House and an insurance company that held over 30 permits which are now expired. The Permit Parking system clearly requires an overhaul to maximise its use. There are people on waiting lists for permits when their is clearly the availability. This revenue stream should be explored as a priority by TMBC due to its ease, as there would be no additional instalment costs just improvement of systems.

The Chamber would like to see the on-street parking to remain as it currently is with the 1hour free parking 8am - 6pm 6 days a week. However, many feel that TMBC have already decided that the on-street charges are a 'done deal' therefore as a second option, we propose a compromise of a minimum 1 hour free parking period be introduced and charges apply to 6 days a week excluding Sundays and bank holidays and free from 6pm, in-line with the current system. In order to assist with revenue generation an increase be applied to those parking for longer than 1 hour.

It is well documented that introducing parking charges to small High Streets has a significant negative effect on it's life and wellbeing. The estimated annual revenue from the new parking charges of £50,000 less the estimated annual running costs of £30,000 of the scheme plus instalment costs, does not equate to the longterm damage that will be caused by removing all free parking and introducing charges 365 days of the year from 8am - 8pm. West Malling High Street is the heart of our community and has been for centuries and the Chamber members want that to continue and want to protect and preserve it. We are reaching out to TMBC to reconsider the on-street parking charges proposed for West Malling High Street and Swan Street.

West Malling has a fragile business community that is fighting to keep their businesses afloat post COVID and during an economic downturn. In addition to on-line competition and large shopping centres. Many have had a very difficult three years with some their

worst year on record during 2023. The introduction of the on-street parking charges feels like the final nail in the coffin.

Yours faithfully

[Redacted]

Secretary West Malling Chamber of Commerce

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Parking Consultations](#)  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Parking Consultation - formal response  
**Date:** 08 December 2023 14:16:13

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Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for the chance to comment on the proposals for changes to on-street and off-street car parking in West Malling. I tried to use your form but unfortunately it did not have enough space for all we needed to say. I hope, therefore, that this email may be taken as a formal response.

On behalf of the Clergy team for St Mary-the-Virgin Church, West Malling, her Churchwardens and Parochial Church Council, I am writing to let you know that we have met to discuss the plans and we are unanimously opposed to the proposals. I am writing on the Church's behalf to explain the nature of our opposition.

### Why are these proposals a problem for St Mary's Church?

There is often a mistaken assumption in the wider community that car parking only matters to St Mary's on Sundays. The life of any parish church is a lot more complex than that and the ability of people to park near the church matters every day.

St Mary's is a busy church in the local area conducting a significant number of Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals consistently through the year. On average, we host approximately 75 such services every year (35 Baptisms, 15 Weddings, 25 funerals) which is more than one a week. St Mary's also hosts civic events, concerts and music festivals, school services, and graduation ceremonies (for St Augustine's College).

So, at least once or twice a week, there are significant gatherings of people at St Mary's. Frequently, from Monday to Saturday we host gatherings of between 100 and 350 people; many of whom do not live locally. In the cases of weddings and funerals, they may travel significant distances to attend. St Mary's relies on the good graces of the High Street to enable such important moments in the life of this community and in the lives of many families. But the High Street's patience and grace with us is not assisted if congregations fail to find suitable parking, and instead park their cars poorly and/or illegally.

Furthermore, our ability to function as a viable parish church is heavily reliant on the fees we receive from hosting such funerals, weddings and baptisms, as well as the donations we receive for use of the church on other civic occasions. This is a financial matter for St Mary's, not just a matter of community spirit and events. We are concerned that changes in parking may particularly impact our ability to compete as a wedding venue against other options like local hostelrys, country houses and wedding venues.

Furthermore, a system of charging for on-street parking is also a concern because it disproportionately impacts those who are least able to withstand the additional charges - those who are more elderly and fragile in health. Not everyone who is thus affected would necessarily qualify for a blue badge and the ability to park without charge.

We are also concerned that charges on the High Street will lead to a displacement of car parking onto local residential roads. The close proximity of St Mary's to Churchfields and Offham Road may lead to inconvenience for our near neighbours and obstructions to their ability to park at their homes. St Mary's also enjoys a close relationship with our local

Church School, West Malling CEP School, and we are concerned at the impact of on-street parking charges on the walking bus, as well as on the vehicular traffic at pick-up and drop-off times in West Street and on Norman Road. The free parking next to the Old Cricket Ground is likely to be made much worse than it already is by these High Street charges.

Some might ask why we don't create our own car park in the churchyard. We are blessed to own a large ancient (open) churchyard that is a heritage asset and part of a conservation area. The consecrated land around St Mary's places upon us an important duty to manage and honour the legacy of West Malling's past down the centuries. West Malling's people have found their final resting place at St Mary's for over 900 years and many of our graves and tombs tell a story of our history and the legacy of our wonderful town. We relish and value this task but the space we have needs careful management. The Council do not have any civic-run deathcare at this end of the Borough and any land we occupy with a car park is land that cannot be used in future for burials. With pressure on grave-space already an issue locally, we don't think it makes sense to use some of the precious land we do have for burials to create a car park. Indeed, our hope is that in return for this deathcare amenity that we provide on the community's behalf, and in return for facilitating such important community moments as burials, the Council would provide us with some understanding and aid in return.

It shouldn't need pointing out, but perhaps it also needs pointing out to the Council that there is enormous importance for such gatherings in the strengthening of society and community. We also know that the High Street benefits economically from our presence (e.g. through the various wedding receptions and funeral wakes that take place in local bars, restaurants and hostelrys after services at the church).

Thinking of our commercial neighbours on the High Street, we are also pastorally concerned for the impact on their well-being economically. It is our calling and task as a Parish Church to offer support and comfort to all and to encourage and support human flourishing. After car parking charges were introduced into the off-street parking in West Malling, we have mourned the loss of many different shops and eateries that saw a resulting drop-off in trade. Local people have lost jobs and the cost of living bites hard. Our vestry charities that seek to offer financial support to local people have seen an increase in demand for grants. While we recognise that TMBC are not trying to deliberately run down our High Street and they also desire a flourishing, prosperous community, we do not see that a blanket approach to on-street parking helps that goal. Rather we think it works against it.

Finally, we are a Parish Church seeking to reach the Church of England's 2030 target for net-zero carbon emissions and have introduced a number of schemes in recent years to better support our environment. For a Borough Council that will also be increasingly aware of its environmental concerns and with a number of Green Party representatives elected at the last elections, we cannot understand how encouraging folk to travel greater distances by car to out-of-town shopping areas is of benefit compared to the shorter journeys they might take to travel into West Malling.

### Seeking a solution

Having laid out our objections, we recognise that the Borough Council is also hard-pressed financially. We recognise that a well-run and financially solvent local Council is of great and positive benefit to everyone in our community; especially the poorest and most vulnerable. We think there is a solution that would introduce some car parking charges to West Malling (both on and off street) which would create income for the Council and mitigate our concerns, the concerns of local business, our local school and local residents

and visitors.

If the Borough Council were to bring forth plans that allowed for 90 to 120 minutes of hours free parking in West Malling, but then with higher charges than currently proposed for longer stays of two to eight hours, we would support the proposals.

Such a revised set of proposals would have the following benefits.

- For St Mary's, an hour's free parking is not enough. A wedding or funeral service can last up to an hour. 90 minutes free parking would be the bare minimum. Hence why we think that two hours is needed.
- High charges for longer stays still achieves the Council's goal of increasing revenue. TMBC could still raise the same amount of money but just in a different set of ratios.
- The school's concerns about pick-up and drop-off times are eased.
- Local residents concerns about a displacement of traffic onto residential roads is mitigated.
- Local shops, eateries and business owners are still able to rely on people 'popping to the shops'.
- High Street parking would also see a greater 'through-put' of cars. We are aware that some car owners currently park on the High Street (for free) and then walk to the Railway Station and commute to work. This is not helpful to the economy of the High Street and clogs up spaces that might otherwise be used by shoppers. We, therefore, recognise that not all car-parking charges are bad for the High Street. Charges for longer stays could be used strategically to stop long-stay car parking for free. That would push commuters' cars towards the railway station (where they should be anyway) and enable more spaces to be available for people trying to shop.

We know this kind of approach is technically very possible. We have seen it used to good effect in other local places like Paddock Wood. We therefore ask the Borough Council to reconsider their scheme around our suggestions and revise their proposals accordingly.

With kind regards and our good wishes for Advent and the coming Christmas festivities.

[Redacted]

cc: [Redacted]  
Matt Boughton, Leader of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

[Redacted]

Team Vicar, Kent Downs & Malling Team  
covering Addington, Birling, Leybourne, Offham, Ryarsh, Trottiscliffe and West Malling

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