



Aylesford

PARISH COUNCIL

CLERK TO THE COUNCIL,
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10 January 2024

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (Off-Street Parking Places) Order 2023 No.2 Consultation on Proposed New Parking Charges for Bailey Bridge (East) and Bailey Bridge (West) car parks, Aylesford.

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (TMBC) are proposing to introduce parking charges in the above car parks and to also improve and extend the East car park to create an additional 15 to 30 Pay & Display and Season Ticket parking spaces, which will be available for all to use.

The proposed charges are.

Up to 30 minutes - 60p

Up to 1 hour - £1.20

Up to 2 hours - £2.00

Up to 3 hours - £2.90

Up to 4 hours - £3.80

Up to 23 consecutive hours £5.80

One month season ticket - £29.00

A 12-month season ticket - £290.00

As per its comments in 2020 Aylesford Parish Council still **Strongly Object** to the implementation of parking charges.

The majority of users are residents who have no choice but to park in the public car parks, they should not be penalised for wanting to live in a historic area where properties were built many years ago with no parking. For most residents there is no other parking option for them as there is very little on street parking provision in Aylesford Village due to its historic nature.

An annual payment of £290 for each vehicle is a lot of money especially with no guarantee of a parking space.

Residents naturally have visitors who will then have to pay to visit their friends and family.

Parents/Carers doing the school run will also be affected by this, as will people who work in the village with some having to question whether they can afford to pay the charges to come to work. Businesses will suffer either through loss of staff, who in the current climate may not be able to afford to continue working in the village or through a loss of people visiting.

Then there are tradesmen to consider who are carrying out work for residents and businesses. They will have to pay and of course with the recent reinstatement of the height barriers this already affects them being able to park as some workmen have large vans and/or ladders that now cannot fit underneath the height restrictions. Those that can fit underneath the restriction will then have to pay, many will not want to and will park possibly causing an obstruction in nearby roads.



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The Aylesford Village Community Centre may also be impacted by these charges as although hirers use the Parish Councils private car park, there will be times when they do need to use the public car parks due to large bookings/parties. People may stop using the community centre if there is the chance they will have to pay for parking.

The Parish Councils private car park is extremely busy at weekends due to the high use of the community centre. Aylesford Football Club is based on site too and the public car parks are fully utilised. Why should people attending these community activities be penalised.

What about people like the elderly who want to pop to the village shop to get their daily newspaper, or some milk etc. They won't do this if they must pay 60p to park they will go to Sainsburys where parking is free. The charges will have a negative impact on the village shop.

If TMBC are minded to implement the charges people will look elsewhere for parking, namely on-street parking up Forstal Road and/or on the surrounding residential roads which as already stated is very limited, which will cause issues for residents not to mention congestion due to inconsiderate parking in the immediate areas.

In 2020 the Parish Council suggested that if the Borough Council chose to implement the charges then there should be no charge for the first half an hour, to enable people to pop into the village quickly i.e., to buy their newspaper.

The Parish Council also suggested that due to the high number of community/social activities taking place at weekends, free parking should be provided in order to offer some support.

However, there does not seem to be any reference to this in the current consultation and the Parish Council questions why these are not included within the consultation proposals?

The two public car parks are used very differently from most others round the Borough due to them being in a historic area, and the amount of community/social events that take place in the village and for this reason the Parish Council feels they should be treated differently.

The Parish Council hopes that common sense will prevail and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council refuse the implementation of these car parking charges as the introduction of such charges will be detrimental to the village, its residents and visitors.

Aylesford Parish Council

From: [Nicola](#)
To: [Andy Bracey](#)
Cc: [Committee Services](#)
Subject: RE: On and off-street parking restrictions - Changes to parking restrictions in the Borough of Tonbridge & Malling
Date: 03 January 2024 09:39:47

Good Morning

Ditton Parish Council has considered the proposed charges for off street parking and Members were concerned the effect charging for parking in Larkfield, Martin Square and Aylesford, Baily Bridge, would have on local residents and businesses.

Therefore the Council has asked me to respond advising that this council objects to introducing charges for car parking at these two locations as it will have a negative effect on the doctors surgery, the chemist and library along with other local businesses. It will likely lead to local people avoiding the local business and instead using larger out of area large business that offer free parking. It will also lead to increased parking on nearby residential streets so will have a wider impact of congesting local roads which are also a bus route.

Regards

Nicola

(Mrs) Nicola Greenaway
Clerk of the Council

Ditton Parish Council
The Community Centre
Kilnbarn Road
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From: Committee Services <committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk>
Sent: 23 November 2023 09:48
Cc: Andy Bracey <Andy.Bracey@tmbc.gov.uk>
Subject: 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 24th 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, 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.

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I should be grateful to receive any comments in writing by 7th 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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**THE TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
(OFF-STREET PARKING PLACES)
ORDER 2023 No. 2**

The Parish Council **OBJECTS STRONGLY** to the proposal to introduce parking charges for the Martin Square Car Park in Larkfield,

In making this objection account has been taken of the reports to the Community and Environment Select Committee of 21st September and Cabinet of 3rd October, 2023.

It is noted the scale of charges proposed is estimated to bring into the Borough Council an annual income of £31,919. No figure is given in the reports as to the costs attributable to this car park. At the meeting with Traders the Council Leader mentioned the business rates payable which we understand are £4,690.00 for 2024/25 (Provisional)

It is also noted the scale of charges previously proposed in 2020 put forward a much cheaper scale starting at 20p for the first 30mins compared with 60p now suggested. Also the Public Notice said the charges would apply from 8am to 6pm with it being free at all other times including public holidays. Now it is proposed charges will apply at all times including Sundays.

Background.

In objecting to any charges being imposed the Parish Council consider it is important to stress the car park was constructed by the former Malling RDC as an integral part of the provision of council houses under a planning permission date 18th March 1964. It was clearly to serve the shops the council built and owned plus the flats above. It is understood this was under Housing powers. Apart from Twisden Road, East Malling all the other car parks in the Malling area were provided as free standing ones.

Since they were opened the shops and flats continued to be owned by the Malling RDC till 1974. It leased the shops and collected the rents for the flats. After the Housing Transfer TMBC continued to lease the shops and receive the rents owning the freehold. The shops are an asset of the Borough Council and the car park's existence and on a free of charge basis must influence the capital value and the rents obtained.

Issues Arising from Borough Reports to Councillors.

In the report of 21st September at pages 3 and 4 some specific information is given which merits some comment as follows;

:

- a. "There are resident vehicles that park in the car park overnight."

Although though no numbers or back up for this statement is given, residents from the flats do park there as they have nowhere else to go. It is understood they should not park in the rear area behind the shops.

- b. "A significant number of cars park all day belonging to the staff of nearby business".

Again it is correct some parking takes place by the staff who work in the shops the borough council lease. They too have nowhere else to go. This includes the staff who are volunteers of the charity shop and the Leisure Trust.

- c. "There is unrestricted on street parking availability nearby on Kingfisher Road"

This not entirely correct. There are double yellow lines along Kingfisher Road from the junction of New Hythe Lane to Magpie Close. Beyond that there are no yellow lines along Kingfisher Road but it is heavily used by parked vehicles belonging to the residents of the terraced former council houses built by Malling RDC as part of the development they undertook. The route is a bus route and more parking would be most detrimental as would introducing yellow lines

Adverse Likely Effects of Charging.

Apart from the effect on the businesses operated in the shops, café, takeaways, and offices the Parish Council considers the following problems would arise:

1. Parking on the Grass Amenity Area next to the Parish Councils Public Toilets. This grass area with its protected trees was laid out by the old RDC as part of the landscaping of the Square. The trees were planted as semi mature. We fear vehicles would park on it to avoid charges as happened when the former Old Persons Home was redeveloped and the borough was unable to prevent it.
2. Rear Access to Shops. Similarly, vehicles may start to park in these areas and the access points and also block the garages.
3. Magpie Close. There is a small concrete parking area for the bungalows which would come under pressure.
4. KCC Library. This is not mentioned in the borough reports but it has a small car park for users. It too could come under pressure.
5. School Pick Up and Drop off. The car park is used which eases the situation outside the schools in Swallow Road. Parking charges would disrupt this practice and transfer problems to other residential roads in the vicinity of the school.
6. Hospice Shop. Will volunteers who come by car be willing to continue if they have to pay to park and will it make it harder for volunteers to be found.
7. Effect on Kingfisher Road. As mentioned if vehicles migrate here it will make the route more congested and more difficult for the buses. Introducing yellow lines would make it difficult for the residents who have nowhere else to park.

Martin Square Traders.

We support the traders who are concerned charges will affect their businesses. This is particularly in respect of customers who are buying say a newspaper or takeaway who would have to pay the charges for a single purchase. They may go elsewhere. We will leave the Traders to put forward their own cases though but the Borough Council should remember they are their tenants.

As to customers going elsewhere to park free this would be at Morrisons (2hrs); Tesco (3 hours) and Lidl (90 minutes) so supermarkets could benefit at the cost of the traders.

It is relevant to record here the Borough recently leased to the butcher who was apparently not told of the possibility of charges even though they had been considered in 2020 and who indicated he may have had second thoughts if he had known.

It is also relevant to record “The Hengist” in Aylesford has closed with a statement saying among other reasons that “with new restrictions in the once free car park looking to be put in place soon it will make it even harder to attract people to the village”. This could equally apply to Martin Square (Kent Online).

Larkfield Health Centre.

This is an important local facility and it is feared some patients may suffer from charges. The car parking is limited. The present premises replaced a Clinic and house. When permission was granted under TM/02/01655 the Area 3 Report specifically mentions “the other parking close by”. Clearly the existence of the car park was an element in granting permission and that has proved to be the case.

Issues Arising from Planning Decisions

Our continuing research would also seem to show in some cases changes to the uses of the shops have involved meeting car parking conditions by relying on the existence of the public car park.

Times of New Parking Charges Proposed

The Parish Council is aware there is an issue that the public notice of 24th November 2023 for “New Parking Charges” does not give the days and times that they would apply. Part 4 headed “Changes to car park charging periods” only lists changes at existing car parks where is already a charge.

Conclusion

The Parish Council considers the imposition of car parking charges would be detrimental to the Martin Square Local Centre and would have unacceptable for traffic management in the surrounding areas.

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

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



Karen Bell
Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer
Kings Hill Parish Council
Kings Hill Community Centre
70 Gibson Drive
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Kent
ME19 4LG
Tel: 01732 870382 / 07376377687
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>
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



Karen Bell
Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer
Kings Hill Parish Council
Kings Hill Community Centre
70 Gibson Drive
West Malling
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ME19 4LG
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From: Committee Services <committee.services@tmbc.gov.uk>

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

Cc: Andy Bracey <Andy.Bracey@tmbc.gov.uk>

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

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

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we are now consulting on the changes to those Orders.

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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

Website: www.westmallingspc.org

Clerk to the Parish Council: Mrs Claire Christmas

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

6th 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.

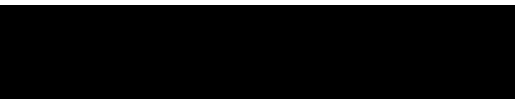
Increase to off-street parking charges

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: Extension to Tonbridge – Upper Castle Field car park
Date: 24 November 2023 11:37:27

To whom it may concern:

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the proposed extension to the Upper Castle Field Car Park. I would like to express my strong objection to the proposal. It's an absolutely awful idea and will change forever and for the worst the character of a key part of the Slade conservation* area. To compound matters, the total number of days and total amount of time when these extra spaces are needed is completely outweighed by the amount of time during which the area that will be lost is used, by residents and visitors to the area alike. The green space that is to be lost offers a place through which the former are likely to walk almost every day, on their way to or from work, when walking to or returning from the shops, when walking their dogs or using as a pleasant place in which to sit and read, or contemplate the castle, or to play with their young children or grandchildren, or to simply be at peace in a beautiful setting. The latter too are likely to enjoy similar advantages afforded by the space that the council is threatening to efface from existence. Many people, including myself, will have picnicked there or played with their children on the swings or played cricket or football or catch with them or, when walking along the path with their children years later, reminisced about those past events. It is an oasis of beauty in the heart of Tonbridge. All of that will be lost if the proposed extension goes ahead.

It is a joyous place through which parents and their children pass on their way to the Slade School on a weekday morning and on picking up their children in the afternoon. Parents spend time there after school chatting whilst their children run around on the grass or play on the swings. All of this will be lost. Walking to the castle on the way into town will mean walking through an ugly car park (at best) or walking along the Slade and then having to cross at the most treacherous point opposite the entrance to the car park. Do not underestimate the number of people who this will affect. If they make this trip twice a day for 5 days a week for work or shopping, then multiply that number, 10, by (say) 50 weeks. Multiply the same number by the number of people making the trip. This is an indication how many daily experiences in people's lives will be affected. Then consider the elderly residents of the homes adjacent to Castle Fields, who will see the green space they look out onto from their homes disappear, and who will find instead cars with their exhaust fumes and noise along with the noise of the people using those cars - now yards from their windows.

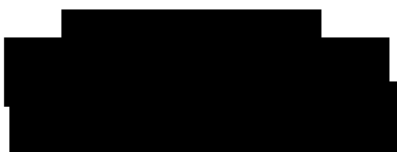
In a period when global warming is the most serious issue facing mankind - literally an existential one, and where cars are one of the biggest contributors to environmental pollution, it is shocking that a proposal that takes away green space and actively welcomes the use of motor vehicles is being proposed.

A local council generates income to fund the services it provides. The services it provides are to ameliorate the lives of its residents. This will unquestionably ruin in some form the lives of every resident of the Slade, of every parent who uses the field impacted by this proposal or the path that runs through it, of every person who regularly uses the existing car park to visit the car park or uses the swimming pool and enjoys before and after doing so, perhaps even not consciously, the aesthetic qualities of the green space. And for what benefit will the eradication of all of these attributes by the council be made? For the benefit of a few car drivers who could either visit the area by train or bus or, if they use their car, might park further afield and walk from there to the Castle. The council could easily find

an alternative to this proposal: why not provide electric buses from car parks further away or encourage people to walk? Longmead is only a 15 minute walk from the Slade. If the counter argument is that this would impact on the elderly or people with disabilities, why not set aside on targeted days an increased number of parking spaces in the current provision, for such people? Those drivers and their passengers who are relatively fit would be benefit from the slightly extended walk or would enjoy the short bus ride.

Make no mistake: this proposal, if it were to go ahead would, instantly ruin the character of the Slade, irrevocably. I completely object to it and it should be rejected out of hand and alternative ideas solicited and considered - perhaps drawing on the fecund and brilliant imagination of the residents of Tonbridge and Malling.

Kind Regards,



*'conserve' means keep as it is.

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Andy Bracey

From: Parking Consultations
Subject: FW: Tonbridge off-street parking consultation 2023 concerns to be raised

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, January 3, 2024 11:27 AM
To: Matt Boughton [REDACTED]
Subject: Tonbridge off-street parking consultation 2023 concerns to be raised

Dear Councillor Matt Boughton,

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to discuss my concerns over the plans to extend car park charging in Tonbridge till 8pm and also include charging on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

There are two points I would like to raise. First around gym members of the council run Angel Centre and secondly about the statement of reasons.

Angel Centre Gym Tonbridge

I am an active member of the Angel Centre gym where I regularly attend 3-4 times a week after work. This means I mostly attend classes or the gym around 18:00. I also normally go on a Sunday as I can go at anytime within gym opening times as parking is free. I choose my times wisely as I am the sole provider for my family and need to look after my health and expenses where best possible.

With this proposed increase to the charging times this potentially could increase my current membership of £47 per month to £80.60 (How I got to this approx. figure using Ringo app that I have to hand for 2 hours of parking (a class is 50-60 minutes long so 1 hour would not be long enough for parking) at £2.80 x 3 times a week x 4 weeks a month added to my current £47 per month membership)

I am aware that there is a proposed plan to build a new gym facility as the current one is no longer fit for purpose and is currently operating at a loss - this is taken from this link on plans to refurbish or replace the gym [Leisure centre to be refurbished or replaced – Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council \(tmbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.tmbc.gov.uk) From reading the article that the gym is already operating at a loss I feel that this extended parking charges will only increase this loss as members would go to other gyms that offer either free parking or cheaper monthly fees.

I have built up a support community of local angel centre gym members who regularly attend gym classes or the gym every week to help encourage each other to maintain a healthy lifestyle and support the community by going to the council run gym not a corporate competitor. It would be a loss to myself and Tonbridge to break up these individual communities that people have built from going to this gym.

I believe a way to support gym members if the hours must be extended, would be to provide a parking pass for evening gym access after 6pm. This way gym members will still pay to park before 6pm as we do today but helps cover the extension. However, I feel that parking changes on Sundays and Bank holiday will further reduce the foot traffic to Tonbridge in general which is already a struggling town centre.

I do strongly suggest this is taken into consideration for this proposal.

Statement of reasons

Part 4 – Changes to car park charging periods

The Council's current parking charges are in place Monday – Saturday, 8am – 6pm, with free parking from 6pm, overnight, Sundays and Bank Holidays (though there are exceptions to this such as Haysden Country Park and West Malling High street car park).

The basis for this has been historic, based on traditional "office hours" and the opening times of local shops. However, retail opening times have changed significantly – many shops are open later and some (large retail supermarkets) are open 24 hours. There is also significant demand for parking on Sundays – not driven by free parking, but by the opportunity to carry out tasks, participate in leisure activities and attend events on what is for most a non-working day. This is particularly an issue in the car parks serving the castle, the swimming pool and sportsground in Tonbridge where it can be extremely difficult to find a parking space on a Sunday for leisure activities.

To this end, the Council is proposing the extension of its off-street car parking periods, to apply until 8pm (save in the West Malling High Street car park and

I have also done some very high level investigation over the statement of reasons for this proposed change around that shops opening hours are longer. I have found that the majority of shops opening hours, that they have advertised on the internet, only run till 6pm or earlier. Some examples I looked at were Boots, WHSmiths, Costa, Starbucks, Halifax, Santander, Holland and Barret and various charity shops.

The main shops that operate later would be Sainsbury, Angel Centre Gym and restaurants. From this high level look into opening times this does not seem to match up with the statement of reasons.

Can further detailed reasonings be provided along with a list of shops open up till 6pm and shops open past 6pm organised by importance of need for example Boots would be a vital shop to enable people to get prescriptions. Whereas a restaurant is more a commercial benefit over supporting the community.

I do hope my comments and concerns can be taken into consideration as areas I'm not sure have been fully researched into. I can fully understand why prices go up to park due to rising costs to operate but I just cannot see how extending hours and charging on Sundays and Bank holidays will support shops, community and the people of Tonbridge and surrounding areas.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards



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A note about how your personal data is used: As your councillor, I am the "data controller" of any personal data you provide to me. I will use this personal data to enable me to deal with your query or matter. This may also require me to share your personal data with Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council to make sure your query gets handled appropriately. If you have any questions about how your personal data is used, please let me know. For full details about your data rights and about how I will process your personal data please see the Councillors' privacy notice which can be found [here](#)

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

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 07557 512493 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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HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

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

18 December 2023

Our Ref: ZA35844

Off-Street Parking Consultation 2023

I am writing in response to the above consultation specifically with regard to the proposals to introduce car parking charges at Martin Square, Larkfield and the Bailey Bridge car parks in Aylesford, which are both within my constituency.

I appreciate these are contentious proposals which will clearly impact a number of residents and businesses in my constituency and I have surveyed and met in person many of those affected to understand their views and concerns. In both cases, residents and businesses are overwhelmingly opposed to the introduction of car parking charges at these sites and I will set out the key reasons why below:

Martin Square, Larkfield

This car park is predominantly used by those visiting the local shops situated on the parade or Thornhills Medical Practice. There are also those who live in Martin Square who would be adversely impacted by the introduction of charges.

Many of the businesses I have spoken to have significant concerns about how the introduction of charges will negatively impact on their trade given they are likely to deter their customers from visiting Martin Square. This follows a particularly difficult few years for these businesses with the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent financial pressures for households and businesses. A high proportion are small and independently-run who have operated on Martin Square for a number of years having built up a loyal, and local, customer base. Included within this group are a new butchers, who like other butchers struggle to compete against the supermarkets, and a Heart of Kent Hospice Charity shop who fear that they will lose volunteers as well as donations. Standing in the queue myself for the pharmacy, customers were openly talking about switching pharmacies because of the charges, threatening its future provision. I therefore understand their concerns that the charges will lead to a loss of trade and of course the impact they will have on employees of the businesses who also use the car park. Furthermore, businesses I spoke to explain that there is no significant problem with the flow in the car park, and most importantly no evidence has been given to prove there is an issue so consider it a blatant and brazen money raising exercise.

Equally worrying is that the car park is also regularly used by staff and patients of Thornhills Medical Practice. The facility provides a range of services to constituents across my constituency and I am concerned that those accessing these vital health services, including pregnant women, minor surgery and the elderly with a limited income, will be charged to park while doing so.

Bailey Bridge, Aylesford

The Bailey Bridge car parks are predominantly used by residents locally who do not have any dedicated on or off-street parking. There are a number of small shops and licensed premises, in addition to a primary school, whose customers and staff will also use these car parks.

Having surveyed and spoken to many who would be affected, they are opposed to the charges and do not understand how a residents' permit would work in practice. They have explained that firstly the cost of the yearly permit at £290 is too high, especially given that there is no guarantee of a car parking space at the end of the day. While there is a consensus to tackle parking pressures in the local area, it is the widely-held view of those using the car park that the proposed scheme unfairly penalises those living nearby without access to on or off-street parking.

As with Martin Square, the car park does also allow customers to visit local shops in addition to pubs. The introduction of a charge will potentially deter customers from visiting and again, impact on the staff of those small, independent businesses who use the car park on a regular basis.

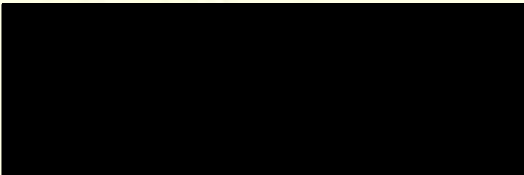
The Bailey Bridge car parks are also well used by teachers, staff and parents of pupils attending St Peters Church of England Primary School. Parents could incur daily charges when dropping off and collecting their child, or potentially increase parking on streets nearer the school which will of course lead to complaints from those living nearby of inconsiderate parking and road safety issues. I am also aware the school has concerns about the impact on its teachers and staff. Even in the event the school can reach an arrangement with the Council on bulk purchasing tickets during term time, this would still represent a considerable sum of money for those affected.

Finally, the Football Club and Community Centre will also be affected by the charges. While it is true that the Community Centre has its own parking, there is often more demand than spaces so the Bailey Bridge car parks act as an overflow. The volunteer Community Centre team work hard to ensure that it can pay for itself and this acts as a direct threat to its income. Furthermore, while the Football Club may bring additional pressure into the car parks at certain times of the week, the charges will merely add to parking pressures elsewhere in the village or along Forstal Road where it can be particularly treacherous.

In conclusion, in Larkfield there is a view that there is no proof of the Council's view on the flow of the car park and that this is simply a money grabbing exercise, pushed by other Councillors based elsewhere in the Borough, with no thought to the impact on local businesses and residents. In Aylesford, there is an acceptance that there are pressures on car parking but these proposals are not the solution, particularly when there is no guarantee of a space when residents are paying £290 per annum to park. The Bailey Bridge car parks are being seen as similar to those car parks elsewhere in the Borough rather than residential spaces for a medieval village that has expanded over time.

I would strongly urge the Council to reconsider these ill thought through proposals.

Yours sincerely

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Tracey Crouch.

TRACEY CROUCH CBE MP

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

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



3rd 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

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
Old Cricket Ground, Norman Road,
West Malling, Kent, ME19 6RL.
01732 842061
www.west-malling.kent.sch.uk

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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

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 that 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

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

[Redacted]

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Responses to consultation from Cllr Hood, submitted through the online response form

Off-street - Introduction of charges in Aylesford's Bailey Bridge (East) and (West) car parks

Response on 28th November 2023

I support the introduction of parking charges to the Bailey Bridge (East) and (West) car parks.;I support the introduction of Season Tickets for residents and local businesses.;

Every car park should contribute towards its maintenance costs where practical.

Response on 7th January 2024

I support the introduction of parking charges to the Bailey Bridge (East) and (West) car parks.;I support the introduction of Season Tickets for residents and local businesses.;; It is fair that every car park in the borough contributes towards the cost of maintenance and that there is a fair charging policy for all communities rather than some paying to park while others park for free.

Charging to park will prevent some motorists from hogging parking spaces and allow a greater turnover so visitors can easily access shops and support the local economy.

Off-street - Introduction of parking charges to Martin Square, Larkfield

Response on 28th November 2023

I support the introduction of parking charges to the Martin Square car park.;I support the introduction of Season Tickets for residents and local businesses?;

Every car park should contribute towards its maintenance costs where practical.

Response on 7th January 2024

I support the introduction of parking charges to the Martin Square car park.;I support the introduction of Season Tickets for residents and local businesses?;

It is fair that every car park in the borough contributes towards the cost of maintenance and that there is a fair charging policy for all communities rather than some paying to park while others park for free.

Charging to park will prevent some motorists from hogging parking spaces and allow a greater turnover so visitors can easily access shops and support the local economy.

Off-street - Extension to Aylesford – Bailey Bridge East car park

Response on 28th November 2023

I support the extension of the Bailey Bridge (East) car park.
Every car park should contribute towards its maintenance costs where practical.

Response on 28th November 2023

I object to the change of use of the Castle Gateway parking spaces to allow more public Pay & Display parking.
Hasn't this area been considered for relocating the council's customer services to free up the Castle for other uses?

Response on 7th January 2024

I support the change of use of the Castle Gateway parking spaces to allow more public Pay & Display parking.

Off-street - Extension to Tonbridge – Upper Castle Field car park

Response on 28th November 2023

I object to the extension of the Upper Castle Field car park to allow more public parking?

The area is within Tonbridge Conservation Area and an extension of the car park would detract from that. The area borders a school and a residential development for elderly citizens. Both children and older people are disproportionately affected by poor air quality which will be made worse by the extension of the car park. The argument that the parking revenue here is the highest and so we need to build more spaces is illogical, there are many car parking spaces available within a short distance, what barrier is there to increasing charges at the other sites to match this one? This area of grass has been put forward for increasing biodiversity by local councillors, it is a carbon asset and valued by the local community especially the Slade School.

Response on 7th January 2024

I object to the extension of the Upper Castle Field car park to allow more public parking?

There is sufficient capacity at other car parks in Tonbridge town centre so extending the car park here is unnecessary. The Green space which would be lost is a carbon sink and destroying it is contrary to the Council's own carbon targets. The extension is likely to increase the number of vehicles in the area which is adjacent to a primary school and elderly peoples accommodation and the resultant worsening air quality will disproportionately affect very young and old people according to scientific research.

Off-street - Increase in parking charges in our car parks

Response on 28th November 2023

I object to the revision of the Council's off-street parking charges

Unless charging is introduced in Snodland, Larkfield and Aylesford I disagree with increasing charges in Tonbridge

Response on 7th January 2024

I do not support an increase in parking charges for the current car parks unless charges are introduced to all car parks where it is financially sustainable.

Off-street - Parking charges to apply later and on Sundays and Bank Holidays

Response on 28th November 2023

I support the introduction of parking charges on Sundays.;I support the introduction of parking charges on Bank Holidays;I support the extension to the charging period to 8pm for all relevant car parks.;

The council has had its funding slashed by central government and revenue has to be found to avoid cuts to services. The current arrangement incentivises people to travel into Tonbridge on Sundays when almost all the independent stores are closed giving chain stores an advantage.

Response on 7th January 2024

I support the introduction of parking charges on Sundays.;I object to the introduction of parking charges on Bank Holidays;

I believe that there is a requirement to charge for parking on Sundays as currently free parking encourages visitors into the towns on the one day that many independent shops are closed.

I do believe that there should be free or cut price permits issued for car parks adjacent to places of worship for a period of time while the residents attend the relevant services in the same way that some parents are able to park for free at school pick up times. This is a policy used successfully at other councils.

On-street - Change of use of parking bays in Avebury Avenue, Tonbridge

Response on 7th January 2024

I support the revision of the Council's on-street parking bays in Avebury Avenue.

'The removal of the metered parking spaces will free up spaces for residents. The current situation is not cost effective.

On-street - Increase in on-street parking charges

Response on 7th January 2024

I object to the revision of the Council's on-street parking charges

There is no justification for yet another increase in the price of a yearly permit which has increased above the rate of inflation. The price of the permits for the scheme is only supposed to cover administration costs not be a revenue maker.

On-Street - 1 hour free parking to become pay and display in West Malling – High Street and Swan Street

Response on 7th January 2024

I object to the introduction of on-street parking charges in West Malling High Street and Swan Street.

There is already a one hour limit to prevent cars overstaying and enabling a turnover of vehicles to assist businesses.