



10th June 2022

Sevenoaks Parking Department
Sevenoaks District Council
Argyle Road
Sevenoaks TN13 1HG

Dear Cllr Fleming & District Councillors Esler and Maskell

Sevenoaks District Council's Parking Consultations

Westerham Town Council ("WTC") responds as follows to the proposed changes to On and Off Street Parking charges as per the Notices of Variation circulated on 18 May 2022.

In short, we object to all of the proposals in the Notices of Variation. Our detailed points are as follows:

- The survey is too simplistic to capture a comprehensive range of responses

We have seen the comments of the Westerham Town Partnership and agree wholeheartedly with their observations (email sent to Parking@sevenoaks.gov.uk dated 09/06/2022)

The above online response form is flawed in not allowing multiple responses and will provide SDC with a skewed and potentially more favourable picture than is in fact the case. The survey should be redrafted.

- The "background to the new charges" section contains factual inaccuracies

There was free parking in Westerham before the 2020 pandemic struck. It is therefore not correct to say that parking charges were withdrawn "during the pandemic."

- The "Proposed Changes" section contains factual inaccuracies

Paragraph 4 states "A large amount of our car park charges will not be increased or will be removed." That is not correct. For Off Street (public car parks), the only charges that are unchanged ie not increased relate to Bradbourne Car Park Sevenoaks for all day weekday and weekend stays plus Season Tickets and Permits

WESTERHAM TOWN COUNCIL
Russell House, Market Square,
Westerham, Kent TN16 1RB
Tel 01959 562147
Email office@westerhamtowncouncil.gov.uk

and additional vehicles on an Annual Resident Permit at the Darent Car Park, Westerham. For On Street (Residents' parking) the only charges that will be unchanged are annual and 6 month non- resident permits for Station Road East.

Every other charge shows an increase and there is no evidence of any parking charges being removed.

- The rationale for needing to recover income through raising parking charges is not explained

We again concur with Westerham Town Partnership on the lack of transparent financial data to justify why SDC's loss of income has to be clawed back through hiking parking charges.

- The percentage increases proposed for On Street parking (Residents' permits) and public parking is extortionate.

The range of increase is between 33% and 185% at a time when nationally we are suffering a cost of living crisis. The level of increase is indefensible.

- The changes to parking charges proposed for Off Street parking (public car parks) will negatively impact visitors and residents.
1. The Darent Car Park being free for up to 3 hours Monday to Saturday is a wonderful facility for the many sports teams that come to Westerham to train on Saturdays plus other sports club members who take part in recreational activities on King George's Fields. If they have to pay, they will seek free parking in the surrounding streets which will compromise residents' parking.
 2. Costells Meadow Car Park has recently been improved with some of the £49,975 of CIL money going towards improved free parking specifically for KGF users. We will have no alternative but to introduce charging if SDC's planned charges go ahead as the close proximity between the Darent Car Park and Costells Meadow will lead to an inevitable overflow of cars seeking free parking in Costells Meadow which was not designed with that in mind.
 3. The loss of up to 15 minutes for free will also deter people from stopping at the local shops to run short errands. They will be likely to go elsewhere such as across the county border to Oxted.
- The impact on Westerham businesses has been grossly underestimated

Raising the parking charges by 100% in some car parks will limit the amount of time visitors will spend in this "vibrant market town" (SDC Press Release) and therefore the amount of revenue they will generate. Shoppers and tourists will choose between buying goods or services but possibly not both. It is disappointing that having recently given residents and tourists more choice where to park, they could, from August, find it prohibitively expensive to do just that.

- There is no evidence of Westerham being treated more sympathetically than other areas in the District

SDC acknowledged the unique status of Westerham in the Town Centres Strategy, April 2022. With no train station and a very limited bus service Westerham's residents and visitors are very reliant on cars. The visitor footfall is essential to the town's economy but extortionate parking charges will drive those visitors away. Westerham is different and vulnerable and cannot withstand these blanket parking increases in the same way as larger more robust towns in the District.

Conclusion

We would welcome the opportunity to expand upon these points with members of the Parking Department with two aims in mind –

1. To ensure a better crafted consultation is rolled out to capture an accurate cross section of views from the community and/or
2. If the current consultation is to remain it is vital that those in the Parking Department fully understand the detrimental effect of what is being proposed with regard to Westerham. The proposed charges ignore SDC's own policy in April 2022 in terms of how Westerham should be treated.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully



Mrs Angela Howells
Town Clerk