

Written submissions received from residents associations and individual residents

Residents Associations

South Ridgway Residents Association - William Petch, Chairman

I am chairman of the South Ridgway Residents Association, we have approximately 420 members. I would like to object on their behalf to the Council's proposed rise in parking charges on several fronts.

This whole scheme is patently obviously a tax grab hidden under a green umbrella. I suspect we are supposed to feel grateful the Council are exercising their duty of care over the purity of our air. There is however an unpleasant smell of political bias and variations in parking charges between different geographical areas are divisive indeed undemocratic especially when based on some very flimsy sophistries.

A good number of our members are elderly, infirm and live alone. They rely to a huge extent on visitors who can park near their homes for a reasonable charge. This proposed rise in fees will cause more isolation for the aged and vulnerable. Also many of our older members, not blue badge holders, rely on a car for everyday transport.

Cars are important for young families with children and all the accompanying paraphernalia. Public transport to hospitals is not good. We have two members who often have to take their husbands to hospital and they need a car and as a result a residents parking permit.

Our high streets are dying. This is not going to be helped by a rise in meter charges and with the death of the high street and the resultant rise in on line shopping we will be over run by even more white vans, hardly beneficial on the polluting front.

One of the Council's justification for the variance in charges is the PTAL rating. Large parts of Mitcham have the same PTAL rating as parts of the South Ridgway area, neither has particularly easy access to trains, yet strangely these parts of Mitcham are not to be subjected to the same price rises as the South Ridgway area.

I would ask the Commission to ask the Council to think again.

Edge Hill Area Residents' Association - Sally Gibbons, Chairman

Merton Council's proposed increase in parking charges is not just a local tax, it is a discriminatory local tax. All residents throughout Merton should know that wherever they choose to travel within the Borough, parking charges will be uniform. After all, we all move around of our own free will, and just because a car is parked in a particular street does not indicate that the owner lives there.

To refer to the Edge Hill Area RA specifically, this covers a small area of Hillside Ward, and residents are lucky that a large proportion of the local accommodation (although not all of it) benefits from off-street parking. However, the on-street parking bays are full to capacity during working hours, and especially so during school term times. This is because there are three schools within the area, one large secondary and two preparatory. These all require parking for teachers and for school support staff, some of the most vital workers in our community, and who often have to travel some distance carrying books, equipment, etc., in order to get to work.

We also have quite a high proportion of elderly residents – in fact, a new block of flats specifically to house the over-55s, has just been completed in the area. This increases the need for peripatetic workers such as carers and home helps, also vitally necessary community workers, and often some of the lowest paid. We all recognise their need for cars to enable them to spend the maximum time available with their many clients. Friends and family also like to visit the elderly (and, indeed, are encouraged to do so by Merton Council).

Edge Hill also houses the Church of the Sacred Heart which, with its own Community Centre next door, is one of the largest, most active churches in the area. It also stands on the steepest part of the already steep hill, and while there is an off-street parking area, it is not especially large, so that when there is a service, funeral, marriage or event at the Community Centre, all of which are frequent, the on-street bays are once again packed to capacity. Much of this transport is for elderly or disabled members of the congregation, who find the walk up the hill seriously difficult, or for families with young children.

For the elderly or disabled in our area, coping with public transport for essential travel is a serious problem. I have, myself, recently had cause to visit St George's and Queen Mary's hospitals by public transport, and both require either a 15 minute walk and then a bus journey, or two bus journeys – and for St Mary's I also had a 20 minute wait, in the rain, for the bus connection. The return journey is the same, and there is no way to avoid walking up the hill at some stage of the journey. As an asthmatic, I need two stops for breath to walk up Edge Hill! This is, of course, a problem that we share with a large proportion of Hillside Ward, and there is no public transport available at that point of the journey.

It seems, therefore, that this hike in parking charges will have most impact on the elderly or vulnerable and workers or visitors from other areas. Is it really the Council's intention make life more difficult for the vulnerable, to penalise low-paid but vital community workers going about their employment, and to place an extra burden on churchgoers?

So far the Council has entirely failed to produce any firmly based evidence that increasing parking charges will improve air pollution, and there are other ways of improving the air quality which will work much more quickly. Instead of penalising those least able to afford an increase, they would do better to offer sensible and workable incentives to enable residents to invest in more eco-friendly cars.

Individual residents

Resident – Pendarves Road

I understand there is to be a special meeting to consider a challenge to the proposed scheme.

I recognize that the scheme will raise substantial revenue, but it is not clear what is to be done to improve air quality.

May I respectfully insist that the revenue raised be **hypothecated** for the provision of electric car charging facilities for residents who live in terraced houses and thus do not have their own off-street charging opportunities.

The current strategy appears to be to provide of providing points where electric cars are already known to be registered. This of course does not lead emission reduction. People may migrate to ULEVs if they know they can charge them with acceptable convenience.

Resident – Melbourne Road, Wimbledon

I am writing to state my very strong objection to the council's proposed increase in residents' parking charges, for the following reasons:

1. There is no evidence that increasing parking charges will improve air quality.
2. The charges are discriminatory, with some areas being charged a higher percentage increase than others. Notably, traditionally labour voting wards are being charged less.

It is very obvious that the council are trying to raise revenue by pretending to care about air quality. If the council really cared about the quality of air their residents breathe, they shouldn't have agreed to build the Harris Academy next to one of the most polluting roads in London. Double standards or confused strategy on cleaner air policy?

The proposed parking increases should therefore be rejected immediately.

Resident – Cochrane Road, Wimbledon

In response to the Council's suggested price hike.

Firstly, I strongly object to this increase given that if the Council are unable to produce cold hard proof that this will decrease pollution, then it is pure conjecture at this point.

Secondly, as a resident who has lived here for over 34 years, I do not drive into the town centre. I live a mere 7 minute walk away!

This is a despicable way of punishing anyone who didn't vote Labour, is an unsubstantiated claim on which to base their promotion of this hike and completely unacceptable to residents.

The Government, having heavily promoted the merits of buying diesel vehicles a few years ago, have now done a complete U-turn. But my husband now owns a van for his work. Now it is considered the worst kind of vehicle and you penalise residents with yet higher and higher prices to park. He is not in a position to buy whatever the Government has decided is the next Best Thing Since Sliced Bread on the back of their mis-informed guidance.

This increase should not, and must not be allowed to be implemented.

Resident – no address given

The insane price hike on the annual parking permit for visitors is basically a tax on carers. I use this pass for my nanny who cares for our 2 year old twins and 11 year old daughter as well as sometimes having her own daughter with her. She needs the car to get to and from work in a timely fashion, you cannot rely on the trains since her arrival directly impacts on the time I can leave and on inclement days she needs it get the children from A to B. Whilst we try and use public transport wherever possible it isn't always practicable especially with twins.

This also impacts on those caring for the elderly or disabled or anyone else who needs regular help.

Resident - Chase Side Avenue

1) I support the overall aims of the proposal in terms of cutting vehicle related pollution and congestion

2) I am perfectly prepared to pay the additional charge although I am concerned about how additional funds will be spent given the constraints of RTRA 1984. The scheme is very unlikely to cost any more or run than it does at present.

3) I feel the patchwork implementation is unlikely to yield favourable results. CPZs discourage car journeys from outside. There is nothing in the proposal to discourage journeys to areas of the borough where CPZs are not in place.

4) The consultation seemed flawed. Statement such as "cars add to pollution by cruising around looking for a parking space" need to be supported by evidence. The highest correlation with congestion and pollution seems to be busy junctions. The problem is through traffic not lack of parking. Council has not shown evidence on how this will improve.

5) The optional nature of the CPZ rollout (as stated in April 2019) puts a limit on any benefits to public health which can be delivered. I cannot see a majority of residents volunteering for escalating charges. It makes more sense for permits for on-street parking to be compulsory and affordable with strict enforcement of transgressions.

6) better cycle infrastructure and accessibility improvements at stations are badly needed in order to connect with neighbouring boroughs.

Resident – Rayleigh Road

I am writing again to complain about Merton Council's proposed increases to parking charges, specifically that the proposed charges will vary according to where people live and that they will be targeted mainly at people who live in areas that do not elect Labour councillors. This is in relation to the Liberal Democrats' recent formal challenge to the Council's 2019 plans.

But while writing, I would like to repeat my earlier complaint (January 2017) concerning the additional surcharge on all diesel vehicles registered in Controlled Parking Zones in Merton. I remain very angry about this.

1. Firstly, I am somewhat surprised the Council had the powers to do this. When the controlled parking zone in Rayleigh Road was brought in, my understanding was that the charge was to allow me to continue to park my car in the road (which had been free up to that time), and that the revenues would be used to cover the administration costs, not as a way of raising revenue for the Council, for which there is an established route - the Council tax. The levy is now being used to raise money, albeit that the Council has said that the money is being spent on "tackling air pollution, local sustainable transport initiatives and necessary infrastructure such as cycle lanes". Isn't that what the Council tax is for?

2. The surcharge being levied is exorbitant - now £150 per annum for a diesel car in CPZ 5F. This is considerably higher than the charges for diesel cars in other London boroughs. How were these figures arrived at?

3. The Council will rake in money and then have to find ways to spend it, whether or not that expenditure is warranted.

4. As I understand it, the Council also ignored the advice of its own consultants in not consulting with residents on the impact of such a high a surcharge, with it being argued that residents could seek to avoid it by concreting over their front gardens to create more off-street parking.

5. Is it really Council policy to encourage residents to concrete over the front gardens? This is environmentally unsound as (on a large scale) it will result in fewer plants, less wildlife, less CO₂ absorption, and additional water run-off into the roads and drains, leading to flooding. Was this impact assessed?

6. I strongly suspect (and I guess the Council does not know either) that most of the diesel pollution that is in Merton air comes from buses, taxis, vans, and those (plus

cars) that originate from outside Merton – none of which are subject to the levy. So the impact of the levy on the quality of Merton air must be small.

7. The levy does not apply to a large house with a forecourt (and maybe several diesel 4X4s) and with a let-down into the road that stops anybody else parking in the road. How fair is that?

8. I agree that the polluter should pay. However this scheme is far from meeting that aim. It bears no relation to how much pollution any one person/car actually creates; it would be much better to raise money (if it is needed), and to change behaviour, via a general increase on the duty on diesel fuel. (And for central government to pass that on to local Councils, ideally in a way that relates to the actual pollution in each borough).

9. It seems quite possible that at some point Central government will act further to make diesel vehicles less attractive, and then Merton residents will be hit by a double-whammy. Would the Council then withdraw the levy? (I bet not).

10. My diesel car is a 2015 Skoda. It meets the Euro 6 standard. Such cars are deemed sufficiently 'clean' not to incur charges for entering the London Ultra Low Emissions Zone and are not eligible for road tax. (In addition, in France, my car comes under the 'CritAir' 2 category (yellow sticker), the second cleanest after electric and hydrogen-powered vehicles). On what basis does Merton take a different line?

11. As you know, the Government has for many years encouraged car buyers to buy diesel-powered vehicles on the grounds that they were better for the environment (global warming) as they emit less CO₂ than petrol. Diesel car owners are now being penalised for following this steer. Cars are expensive and are not something most people sell and buy frequently, at least new ones. And the second-hand value is likely to fall.

12. Finally, if the Council wants to reduce pollution in Merton, it should remove all the speed bumps. These have been shown to increase pollution as vehicles tend to brake as they approach them and then accelerate away. It should also replace all diesel buses with electric or hydrogen-powered ones.

Is Labour hoping for my vote in the next local elections? It would appear not.

Resident - Alverstone Avenue

I have decided I am going to give up my car in October so won't be troubled by the huge increase in the parking charge for my car. I am however very concerned about the proposed hike in the charge for visitors permits. This directly affects the elderly (me), young families and disabled people and over the course of a month could be another hefty bill. This from a so called Labour Council. Perhaps the charge in this neighbourhood could just go to those who have extended their property and we poorer people could have the same cost as the rest of the Borough!!

Resident – no address given

Please rethink this change, as it will prevent more and more shoppers etc visiting Wimbledon . It is already a nightmare to know where to park and when without getting a parking ticket/fine. That's without the tricky/confusing road signage when turning left near a bus lane. Merton are shooting themselves in the foot and being very shortsighted . I will go to Kingston more to shop and socialise or shop online.

Please rethink this increase of parking fees . Us drivers are already being penalised for having non green vehicles surely that's enough for now!

Resident – Thornton Road/Denmark Road

I currently live in Thornton Road SW19. At the time of the vote by residents to decide on whether residents parking would be introduced locally, I lived in Denmark Road SW19.

Prior to the vote, I distinctly recall that the information which was sent to residents such as myself clearly stated that the monies raised from the scheme would only be used to cover the costs of the administration of the scheme. Local residents made an informed decision on how to vote, based on that precise information.

We are now told, with no further residents vote, that there will be a significant increase in the cost of permits. Additional monies raised will be used to "improve air quality". At a minimum, this is a very important breach of trust. Additionally, I also question whether this is legal, given the original premise on which the vote was based is being completely ignored.

Resident – Strathearn Road

I am writing to register my opposition to the proposed increase in residents parking permit charges in Merton.

As I understand it, these increases have been justified as a means to persuade residents to give up their cars and use public transport, in order to reduce air pollution. However, this is neither practical nor logical.

In my case, I do not drive around the borough very much, but my wife requires a wheelchair which has to be taken in the car when we do go out. Public transport is not an option for us and for many others. So the increased charges will not result in us giving up the car and will be a needless additional burden on two pensioners.

If the council is serious about reducing air pollution from vehicles, it should pay attention to commercial traffic. I walk down Alexandra Road almost every day, and I always see three or four large refuse and rubble lorries owned by Cappagh pass down the road in the ten minutes that I am there - and the same number coming back in the other direction. This is a continuous all day traffic through the borough from Cappagh and Reston Waste which is contributing hugely to air pollution along

this residential road. Why can't the council take action against this instead of penalising residents?

Kindly take note of my objections.