



The Oxted Parking Review

The introduction of charges is part of a multi-million pound plan to improve the town centre.

Get the facts



Dear resident,

As you may be aware, on Thursday night, councillors will consider recommendations for parking charges to be introduced to Council-owned car parks in Oxted.

We know our residents are concerned about these recommendations, however we feel they are absolutely necessary if we are to make much needed improvements to parking in Oxted as well as to the town centre itself.

Managing and maintaining car parks across the district currently costs the Council over £120,000 a year. While we are proud to have provided free parking for so long, this is no longer a luxury we can afford.

The reality is that since 2010 the money we receive from central government has been dramatically reduced and the cuts will continue until 2020 when we expect to have to fund council services with no financial support from government. Needless to say, this is incredibly challenging.

We urgently need to provide more parking capacity for local workers and shoppers and to help attract new ones. We need better enforcement to make sure the car parks are used properly. Sadly, in recent years many businesses have left Oxted and the town centre is in decline.

We want to be able to invest in the town centre, encourage a wider variety of shops and make it more attractive. We have developed an ambitious programme called Regeneration Oxted to deliver these changes and we will be consulting on this in the summer. Without income from our car parks this will be very difficult to achieve.

I hope you find this article useful. We are keen for you to understand the full facts behind the proposal to charge for parking and improve Oxted town centre.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Louise Round
Chief Executive, Tandridge District Council



Get the facts

Why are you introducing charges in Oxted?

It costs over £120,000 a year to run the Council-owned car parks. This is a cost which until now, has been paid for by all tax payers across the district regardless of whether they actually use our car parks.

Since 2010, the money we receive from central government has been dramatically cut and by 2020, we expect to receive no financial support from government at all.

This means we have had to look at all Council spending to see where we can save money and where we can generate income to support the many services our residents, particularly our more vulnerable residents, depend on.

There are many services which by law councils must provide. However, there are many services the council does not have to provide but would like to continue to do so, like the Wellbeing Prescription service which helps adults improve their health. It is these services we are committed to protect.

Despite these challenging times, we want to be able to invest in our town centres to make them more competitive. In Oxted, we want to provide additional parking capacity, better parking enforcement and make the town centre more attractive for new businesses and shoppers.

For us to achieve this, we need an income from our car parks.

What will you do with the money you get from charging?

First and foremost, we need an income from our car parks to pay for their management and maintenance.

We also want to generate enough income to support the delivery of multi-million pound improvements to Oxted town centre.

Our first priority is to provide additional parking capacity. We are looking at a number of options for our car parks including multi-storey, underground and park and ride.

We also want to be able to provide better enforcement so our car parks are used properly and people don't park all day where they shouldn't.

We are working with the Oxted Business Improvement District (BID) to make the town centre more attractive. We are currently looking at options to provide a market square, more greenery and seating, and better paving. We are really looking forward to finding out what residents think about these ideas.

If we don't have an income from parking, it will be very difficult to achieve these improvements.

What will Oxted look like in the future?

Regeneration Oxted is the name of an ambitious programme we have launched to improve the town centre. The programme will be led by the Council and supported by the Oxted BID and Surrey County Council. The programme will deliver:

■ **Removal of the Oxted Gasholder**

Following discussions with the owners SGN and National Grid and their development partner St William, a planning application for a residential development on the site will be presented in summer this year.



■ **An Urban Redesign Project for Station Road East and West**

The Council is supporting the Oxted BID in this ambitious project to transform both sides of Oxted. Urban designers Greer Pritchard, whose portfolio includes the 2012 Olympic Park design, have created conceptual proposals for a market square, improved town centre layout, better access, more greenery, more seating and more attractive paving and surfacing for the town. This will all help attract new businesses and visitors to Oxted.

We would like to consult with the public about these ideas in the early summer, however this will depend on whether there is enough income from parking to help deliver the project.

■ **More parking capacity**

This multi-million pound project will see the Council develop its car parks to provide additional parking capacity for shoppers, visitors and businesses. We are looking at a number of options including multi-storey, underground and park and ride and are aiming to have conceptual designs ready for the public in the early summer.

Once again, the delivery of this project would need to be supported by sufficient income from parking.

■ **Creation of a Business Hub**

Small and micro businesses trying to start up have highlighted the difficulties of finding affordable, flexible office space in Oxted which forces them out of the area or restricts their ability to grow. We will look at opportunities to provide space to help new businesses start up and thrive.

Why can't the free period be 2 hours rather than 1 hour?

Surveys of our car parks show that 77% of people who visit Oxted do so for under two hours. If we make the first two hours of parking free for everyone we would barely cover the costs of running the car parks, let alone have enough funding to support the delivery of improvements.

To be clear, everyone who parks for two hours will still get the first hour of parking free and you won't need to keep dashing back to your car to update your ticket. We plan to introduce a pay-on-exit system that will only charge you for the time you are there.

The butcher, cycle and cookware shop have already closed down, what does the future look like for the local businesses we value?

Oxted businesses have been reporting a slow decline for some time and even offering free parking for 4 hours hasn't prevented this from happening.

This is due to a combination of things - competition from online shopping has had a significant effect, but so has the lack of diversity of the shops that are here, therefore impacting Oxted's ability to attract people to spend time and money shopping. Some parts of the town are also looking run down.

Charges will not kill the high street – doing nothing will.

We need to generate more footfall for the town. Research strongly shows that the experience offered to shoppers visiting a town has a far greater impact on its vitality than whether or not they have to pay for parking.

We are working closely with local retailers, represented by the Oxted BID, to make the town centre more attractive, support existing businesses and encourage new businesses to the town. This will include improving parking provision for shoppers and businesses.

This will be difficult to achieve without enough income from parking.

I've signed the petition, how will that be taken into account?

The petition will be discussed at the meeting of the Full Council on 20 April.

This will give the elected politicians the opportunity to put all the facts out on the table and decide on what is best for the future of Oxted.

We think it is fair for those who use our car parks and visit our town to help pay for the upkeep of the car parks and invest in the future of Oxted.



Why can't you find the money you need from elsewhere?

Since the government announced its decision to withdraw funding, we have created a solid financial plan so we can continue to provide good quality services for residents and businesses. As part of this, we have plans in place to generate more income for the Council to replace the government funding we have lost.

This will enable us to protect services that we don't have to provide but are highly valued by residents like our Wellbeing Prescription service which helps adults improve their health and saves GPs time.

We have also made other hard decisions. We have reduced the size of the Council's staff and are transforming the way we work to be more efficient and customer focused.

We have reached a stage where cutting costs further will start to affect the services our residents and businesses depend on. We don't want this to happen.

We are one of the last councils to charge for use of our car parks. Most of our neighbouring councils have been charging for some time now. Unfortunately the time has come for us to take the same step or something else will have to give and it will be difficult to fund improvements to Oxted town centre.

Won't commuters just take all the spaces?

Many of our residents need to commute to London and find it increasingly difficult to park in Oxted at the overcrowded station car park.

A number of residents and businesses are concerned that the Council car parks will be full of commuters leaving no space for shoppers or businesses.

We have agreed with the Oxted BID, that our car parks will be clearly marked so there is adequate space for short and long term car park users.

We will also look at this as part of providing additional parking capacity.

You're reviewing parking in Oxted now, what next?

We are looking at all Council-owned car parks in Oxted including Ellice Road, Johnsdale, Gresham Road and the Council Offices, in terms of providing additional parking for the town centre.

Over the next year, we will be looking at all our Council-owned car parks across the district.

What are the charges?

If approved on 20 April, charges will be introduced over the summer. Following constructive discussions with the Oxted BID, the Council has agreed to amend the recommendations as follows:

- 1 hour free parking.
- There will be no charges in the evenings, Saturdays, Sundays or bank holidays and there will be free parking for special events run by the Oxted BID.
- Surrey County Council has confirmed free on-street parking of between 1 and 2 hours will continue in the town centre.
- Additional parking permits for local businesses.
- The Oxted BID will be responsible for the allocation of all business permits.
- The introduction of clearly marked bays for long and short term users in Ellice Road car park to control commuter parking.
- There will be free car parking in the Gresham Road car park (next to the Oxted Health Centre before the barrier) but only for people visiting the Health Centre.
- The Council will work closely with the Oxted BID to regularly review parking arrangements so changes can be made quickly should they be needed.

Period	Charge
0 – 1 hour	Free
1 hour – 2 hours	£1.50
2 hours – 3 hours	£3
3 hours – 4 hours	£4.50
Over 4 hours	£6.50

In conclusion

The Council expects introducing charges will:

- Pay for the running of Council-owned car parks.
- Deliver more parking capacity.
- Improve enforcement so our car parks are used properly and people don't park all day where they shouldn't.
- Generate an income so we can invest in the town centre, attract a wider variety of shops and make it more attractive.

To keep up to date with news visit

www.tandridge.gov.uk/carparking.