

## Parking decision Q&A

### Supply and demand

A number of comments and feedback suggested that there was no evidence to demonstrate that raising parking charges would reduce car use and lead to improved air quality. We believe that there is evidence to show that the level of parking charges is likely to stimulate or nudge people into reducing car usage or removing their reliance on needing a car altogether.

Parking charges have long been used to manage and regulate kerbside activity and provision. Research by the Canadian Parking Association and London Councils amongst others shows the value that parking charges have in managing demand and recent policy initiatives like the Congestion Charge and Ultra Low Emission Zone show how charging can change behaviour.

### Access to public transport

In cases where there is a reasonable opportunity to use public transport, or indeed walk or cycle, Merton's aim is to encourage everyone to use these options over the use of a motor vehicle. As residents agreed in our 2019 Residents Survey, good public transport is one of the biggest benefits of living in Merton. Generally, charges have been set higher where there are good transport links over less well-served areas.

There is a significant difference in transport infrastructure and accessibility depending on where a resident lives, visits or works within the borough. Following the consultation process, we have reviewed the access to public transport rating for each CPZ and walking distances to main line, tram and underground stations access. As a result we have decided that controlled parking zones VNE, VNS, VN, VQ, VSW, VSW1, VSW2, be re-categorised as Tier 2 from Tier 1.

### Parked cars

A number of respondents stated that parked cars do not pollute. No car is bought just to be parked; it is bought to be driven. How often and how far does vary, but it will be driven. The principle of charging based on location to public transport and local amenities is that it is easier to travel without the car on a day-to-day basis, than from locations with poorer access to amenities and public transport.

### Through Traffic & Congestion

A number of representations highlighted a range of traffic and road safety issues/ concerns, often with a link to the likelihood of individuals choosing cycling and walking over the use of a car. The point was also made that through traffic as opposed to parked cars were the primary contributor to poor air quality. There were also comments about HGVs, Taxis, buses and other transport being a contributor to the problem, and that the council should look to address these issues

There is no one simple solution to the growing problem of poor air quality and other transport related matters caused by increased car ownership and general traffic within the borough and London more widely. We have a duty and we are addressing the many concerns in respect of 'other factors', which contribute to poor air quality and congestion. We will continue to lobby Government and work with TfL to reduce HGV emissions. The Mayor of London is taking action with the new Ultra Low Emission Zone, which has the ambition to push the change towards cleaner and less polluting vehicles as quickly as possible. In order to nudge people towards active transport we must ensure our streets are safe. We will

therefore embrace the Vision Zero targets to eliminate fatal and serious casualties by 2041 and are currently rolling out borough-wide 20 mph speed limit zones

### What is the income from parking charges used for?

A number of the responses received questioned what parking revenue is spent on. The council can only spend the money it receives from parking charges in the manner set out in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (RTRA) which directs that income can be used for the day-to-day management of the parking service, to fund Freedom passes, transport related expenditure, environmental improvements, and maintenance and upgrades to carriageways and footpaths within the borough

### High street, business and town centre considerations

We recognise that High Streets are changing with the growth of internet shopping. Further closures of familiar chains and primary department stores continue to be a concern for our high streets. Even with no significant increase in charges in Merton for approximately 10 years, alongside the introduction of 20-minute free bays, the impact of online shopping has changed the dynamics of the high street. This has also affected the night-time economy. We are mindful of these challenges and received written submissions from the business sector, including the Wimbledon Society and Love Wimbledon BID.

In order to assist businesses and support the night-time economy, we will reduce charges in the underused car parks of St Georges and Queens Road to a flat fee of £2 between 6pm and 11pm. We will also continue our commitment to the free twenty-minute parking bays. Although there is a perceived risk that a reduction in cars to high streets will have a detrimental effect, research by TfL demonstrates the economic benefits walking and cycling has on town centres.

### Emissions and Diesel Levy

The council has committed to reviewing the impact of the existing diesel levy and the potential for future emissions based charging within Merton. The report will be presented to Cabinet later this year and all of the comments received in the consultation will be considered in the future review.

### Disabled and carer permits/drivers

Merton is committed to supporting its residents who have mobility issues, and there are a number of ways we currently support this objective. We are a member of the national Blue Badge scheme. The Blue Badge provides a range of parking and other motoring concessions for people who are registered blind or have severe mobility problems. Blue Badge holders can park free of charge in any Merton disabled parking bay, pay & display and shared use bay or permit holder bay. A Blue Badge holder in Merton is entitled to apply for a free carer permit under certain conditions. This is to further support those residents with mobility issues and in need of regular support and care.

### Charging Levels

A large number of respondents felt that the proposed increased charges were too high. In addition, they were concerned that the charges when the CPZ was set up were initially just to cover costs but now appeared to be an additional tax. A large number of respondents also highlighted that the proposed increased charges would have a big financial impact on them and that they could not afford to change their vehicle.

We are mindful of economic challenges facing many residents and visitors to the borough, but also need to meet our obligations to reduce poor levels of air quality and improve public health, increase cycling, walking and use of public transport, especially as there has been no

increases to parking charges for several years. The new charges are considered a reasonable amount to encourage residents and visitors to consider their car use and alternative travel choices. For example, in the highest proposed CPZ permit charge area (£150) this equates to 41 pence per day. Over 70% of on street spaces are priced at £3 or under per hour.