



Babergh District Council Parking Charges Proposals Engagement Survey Feedback Report

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Background

Background

As part of Babergh District Council's proposals to vary parking charges in Sudbury, Hadleigh and Lavenham, an online engagement survey was conducted in early 2024 with town and parish councils, district councillors and selected recognised groups within the district.

The survey – which ran from 1st February until 3rd March 2024 – aimed to build on previous feedback captured from residents and other stakeholders as part of Babergh District Council's Parking Strategy consultation in 2022.

Feedback from the survey will be reflected in proposals to be examined by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee before going to Cabinet for a final decision.

This report provides a summary of the feedback received from survey respondents. The report has been prepared by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council's Research and Insight Lead, on behalf of its Parking Services team.

About the proposals

Babergh District Council has brought forward proposals to vary parking charges in Sudbury, Hadleigh and Lavenham.

Subsidising the current three-hour free parking cost the Council approximately £425K in 2023/24, and that is set to rise further. The Council faces significant budget pressures in the next financial year and over the medium term and can no longer afford the subsidy if it is to continue delivering other essential services to residents and communities.

The proposal is to introduce modest, revised tariffs in council-run car parks which are as low as possible compared to other authorities, so as to continue to attract visitors, ensure shoppers and workers have access to the right spaces in the right places, and increase space turnover.

Further information outlining the background to the proposal, details of the engagement exercise, and answers to some frequently asked questions were hosted on Babergh District Council's website during the engagement period. A copy of this information is included in Appendix A.

Survey development, distribution and response

Survey development

The survey questions were developed by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council's Parking Services team with support from its Strategic Policy team. It sought views on:

- the proposal to vary the tariffs in council-run car parks in Babergh;
- current car park provision and facilities in Babergh;
- on-street parking and parking enforcement; and
- sustainable transport.

Respondents also had the option to upload any supporting documentation.

A copy of the survey questionnaire is included in Appendix B.

Survey distribution

An invitation and reminder to complete the survey was sent to town and parish council clerks, district councillors and selected recognised groups via email. The number of recipients within each group is shown below.

Table 1: Survey distribution by respondent type

	n
Total survey invitations	123
Town and Parish Councils	66
Babergh District Councillors	32
Other recognised groups and organisations	25

Survey response

The survey was open for four and a half weeks between 1st February and 3rd March 2024, during which a total of 86 survey responses were received. In addition, two submissions were received via email. These have been included in the reporting in relation to Q1.

Although the survey was sent to town and parish council clerks to provide a response on behalf of their council as a whole, a number of responses were received from individual town and parish councillors. In total, representation was received from 35 Town and Parish Councils, either on behalf of the council as a whole or from one or more individual councillors.

A breakdown by respondent type is shown below.

Table 2: Survey response by respondent type

	n
Total responding to the survey	86
Town and Parish Councils	15
Individual Town and Parish Councillors	50
Babergh District Councillors	12
Other recognised groups and organisations	9
Other responses received via email	2
Individual Town and Parish Councillors	1
County Councillor	1

Analysis and reporting

Responses were thematically coded to enable responses to each question to be quantified. Data tables are included within this report for each question to show the number and percentage of comments by theme. Please note that some comments were coded under more than one theme, therefore percentages add up to more than 100%.

Illustrative quotes are included throughout the report.

Key findings

Key findings

Q1. Comments on the proposal to vary the tariffs in council-run car parks in Babergh

All respondents (88) commented on the proposal to vary the tariffs in council-run car parks in Babergh.¹

More than half (59) of the comments were coded under more than one theme. Percentages therefore add up to more than 100%.

The key concerns raised by respondents were that:

- The introduction of charges will be detrimental to the towns, high street, shops or businesses (42 mentions / 48%).
- Free parking represents an important benefit for households and certain groups (e.g. elderly and vulnerable residents, staff and volunteers) (15 mentions / 17%).
- Rural communities and/or lack of public transport means residents need to use cars/car parking to access shops/services/town centres (14 mentions / 16%).
- The introduction of charges will negatively impact on-street parking (12 mentions / 14%).
- The introduction of charges will negatively impact supermarket parking provision (6 mentions / 7%).
- The introduction of charges will negatively impact / deter users of Kingfisher Leisure Centre (5 mentions / 6%).

A number queried or challenged the basis of the proposal, stating that:

- There is a lack of information/clarity around the cost figures quoted / 425K figure is considered misleading (14 mentions / 16%).
- They do not agree with the rationale / running costs should not be seen as a subsidy / role of the council is to support residents and businesses (10 mentions / 11%).
- Savings should or could be found from elsewhere instead (9 mentions / 10%).
- There is a lack of information about the proposals (including level of the charges being proposed) (6 mentions / 7%).
- The cost of collection and/or parking enforcement is significant / enforcement costs could be greater than the funds collected (6 mentions / 7%).

Other respondents felt that:

- Charging is necessary to cover costs / offset financial pressures / protect other council services (8 mentions / 9%).
- Car park users should pay for parking facilities (rather than all council taxpayers) (5 mentions / 6%).

¹ Comments from the two responses received by email are included with the Q1 survey responses.

Respondents highlighted a range of conditions that they felt were important if tariffs were to be varied, including:

- Retaining a period of free parking (18 mentions / 20%), specifically:
 - at least 30 minutes of free parking (2 mentions / 2%)
 - at least 1 hour of free parking (13 mentions / 15%)
 - at least 1.5 hours of free parking (1 mention / 1%)
 - at least 2 hours of free parking (2 mentions / 2%)
- Ensuring that any charges are kept low / to a minimum (15 mentions / 17%).
- Ensuring that coin/cash payment facilities are retained (6 mentions / 7%).

Several respondents put forward alternative or additional proposals.

Q2. Comments on current car park provision and facilities in Babergh

Fifty-nine respondents (69%) provided a response about on-street parking and parking enforcement. Percentages are shown based on all 86 survey respondents.

Some comments were coded under more than one theme. Percentages therefore add up to more than 100%.

Respondents provided a range of views on the current car park provision and facilities, including that:

- Current car parking provision / level of parking is good/adequate/fine (21 mentions / 24%).
- Current car parking provision is insufficient / inadequate (8 mentions / 9%).
- Car parks could be better maintained (e.g. better signage, markings, general maintenance, ticket machines not working) (8 mentions / 9%).

Additional comments also reiterated views related to the proposal, including that car parking should be left free / arrangements kept as they are / 3 hours parking is good for local businesses (8 mentions / 9%).

Respondents also highlighted a range of parking-related issues or queries, including some specific comments related to the Parking Strategy. This included several detailed comments relating to parking provision in Lavenham; whilst not reported in full within this section – due to the length and detail of responses – they will be reviewed in detail by Babergh District Council's Parking Services team.

Q3. Comments regarding on-street parking and parking enforcement

Sixty-nine respondents (80%) provided a response about on-street parking and parking enforcement. Percentages are shown based on all 86 survey respondents.

Some comments were coded under more than one theme. Percentages therefore add up to more than 100%.

This included a number of responses about increased on-street parking and enforcement related to the proposal to vary parking tariffs, with respondents commenting that:

- Varying the charges will increase on-street parking / increase the need for on-street parking enforcement (19 mentions / 22%).
- Increasing enforcement will create/add to costs (10 mentions / 12%) or questioning the cost-benefit of enforcement (4 mentions / 5%).

Respondents also put forward views on on-street parking enforcement and restrictions more generally, including:

- That more enforcement is needed / would be welcomed (14 mentions / 16%).
- That more / better marked restrictions are needed (9 mentions / 10%).
- Positive comments about current levels of enforcement / enforcement generally (5 mentions / 6%).
- Mentions of on-pavement parking / need for enforcement (4 mentions / 5%).

The importance of access to on-street parking was also raised, including:

- The need to consider/prioritise parking for residents (including mention of resident permits) (9 mentions / 10%).
- The need to consider businesses / business deliveries (4 mentions / 5%) and the provision of on-street parking for Blue Badge users and residents with mobility issues (3 mentions / 3%).

Several respondents provided comments on specific local area issues.

Q4. Comments on sustainable transport

Seventy-two respondents (84%) provided a response about sustainable transport. Percentages are shown based on all 86 survey respondents.

Some comments were coded under more than one theme. Percentages therefore add up to more than 100%.

Comments highlighted several transport-related issues and opportunities, including:

- That public transport / bus travel is limited and/or needs improvement (47 mentions / 55%).
- A lack of cycle paths / need for more cycle paths and/or that cycling on the roads is too dangerous (21 mentions / 24%).²
- Improvements to pedestrian routes / lack of safe walking routes (10 mentions / 12%).
- A need for bike parking facilities (6 mentions / 7%).

A number of respondents (12 mentions / 14%) stated that increasing sustainable transport options is unlikely to get people out of their cars, the culture change required is too great or public transport unlikely to ever improve enough.

Supporting documents

Two respondents submitted supporting documentation alongside their response, detailing the results from two separate surveys of car park users, in Sudbury and Hadleigh. The findings from these surveys will be reviewed and considered by Babergh District Council in addition to the survey submissions.

² Each of these were mentioned by the following number of respondents, with 5 respondents mentioning both: A lack of cycle paths / need for more cycle paths (15 mentions / 17%); Cycling on the roads is too dangerous (11 mentions / 13%).

Full results

Question 1: Parking tariffs

Q1. PARKING TARIFFS

The Council is proposing to vary the tariffs in our car parks to help tackle the financial deficit that we are facing to lessen the cuts or savings we will have to make to other services. At present, the free parking that is provided in our car parks in Sudbury, Hadleigh and Lavenham is subsidised by all council tax payers in the district.

We are committed to ensure that the charges that would be introduced would remain as low as possible and are in line with towns and villages of a similar size across the East Anglian region.

What comments would you like to make regarding this proposal?

All respondents (88) commented on the proposal to vary the tariffs in council-run car parks in Babergh.³ More than half (59) of the comments were coded under more than one theme. Percentages therefore add up to more than 100%.

The key concerns raised by respondents were that:

- The introduction of charges will be detrimental to the towns, high street, shops or businesses (42 mentions / 48%).
- Free parking represents an important benefit for households and certain groups (e.g. elderly and vulnerable residents, staff and volunteers) (15 mentions / 17%).
- Rural communities and/or lack of public transport means residents need to use cars/car parking to access shops/services/town centres (14 mentions / 16%).
- The introduction of charges will negatively impact on-street parking (12 mentions / 14%).
- The introduction of charges will negatively impact supermarket parking provision (6 mentions / 7%).
- The introduction of charges will negatively impact / deter users of Kingfisher Leisure Centre (5 mentions / 6%).

A number queried or challenged the basis of the proposal, stating that:

- There is a lack of information/clarity around the cost figures quoted / 425K figure is considered misleading (14 mentions / 16%).
- They do not agree with the rationale / running costs should not be seen as a subsidy / role of the council is to support residents and businesses (10 mentions / 11%).
- Savings should or could be found from elsewhere instead (9 mentions / 10%).
- There is a lack of information about the proposals (including level of the charges being proposed) (6 mentions / 7%).

³ Comments from the two responses received by email are included with the Q1 survey responses.

- The cost of collection and/or parking enforcement is significant / enforcement costs could be greater than the funds collected (6 mentions / 7%).

Other respondents felt that:

- Charging is necessary to cover costs / offset financial pressures / protect other council services (8 mentions / 9%).
- Car park users should pay for parking facilities (rather than all council taxpayers) (5 mentions / 6%).

Respondents highlighted a range of conditions that they felt were important if tariffs were to be varied, including:

- Retaining a period of free parking (18 mentions / 20%), specifically:
 - at least 30 minutes of free parking (2 mentions / 2%)
 - at least 1 hour of free parking (13 mentions / 15%)
 - at least 1.5 hours of free parking (1 mention / 1%)
 - at least 2 hours of free parking (2 mentions / 2%)
- Ensuring that any charges are kept low / to a minimum (15 mentions / 17%).
- Ensuring that coin/cash payment facilities are retained (6 mentions / 7%).

Several respondents put forward alternative or additional proposals.

Table 3 displays the full range of responses received to this question, coded by theme.

The remainder of this section includes illustrative quotes related to the most frequently mentioned themes.

Table 3: Q1. Parking tariffs – coded responses

	Count	%
Key concerns		
Introduction of charges will be detrimental to the towns/high street/shops/businesses	42	48%
Free parking represents an important benefit for households and certain groups (e.g. elderly and vulnerable residents, staff and volunteers)	15	17%
Rural communities and/or lack of public transport means residents need to use cars/car parking to access shops/services/town centres	14	16%
Introduction of charges will negatively impact on-street parking	12	14%
Introduction of charges will negatively impact supermarket parking provision	6	7%
Introduction of charges will negatively impact / deter users of Kingfisher Leisure Centre	5	6%
Costs unlikely to remain low / there is a risk/likelihood they will increase following introduction	4	5%
On-street parking restrictions are not currently enforced / needs to be more enforcement	3	3%
Queries and challenges around the basis of the proposal		
Lack of information/clarity around the cost figures quoted / 425K figure is misleading	14	16%
Do not agree with the rationale / running costs should not be seen as a subsidy / role of the council is to support residents and businesses	10	11%
Savings or funding should/could be found from elsewhere instead	9	10%
Lack of information about the proposals (including level of the charges being proposed)	6	7%
Cost of collection and/or parking enforcement is significant / enforcement costs could be greater than the funds collected	6	7%
Query around whether an impact study has been carried out	4	5%
Query / comment about the potential impact on (reduced) business rates received by BDC	3	3%
Revenue won't be spent on better public transport / no proposals in place to improve public transport	2	2%
Rationale for varying the charges		
Charging is necessary to cover costs / offset financial pressures / protect other council services	8	9%
Car park users should pay for parking facilities (rather than all council tax payers)	5	6%
Other councils/towns charge for car parking	4	5%
Question around whether councils should be incentivising car travel over environmental and active travel aims	2	2%

	Count	%
Key considerations		
Retain a period of free parking	18	20%
<i>Retain at least 30 minutes free parking</i>	2	2%
<i>Retain at least 1 hour free parking</i>	13	15%
<i>Retain at least 1.5 hours free parking</i>	1	1%
<i>Retain at least 2 hours free parking</i>	2	2%
Charges should be kept low / to a minimum	15	17%
Ensure that coin/cash payment facilities are retained	6	7%
Expectation that car parks will be well-maintained if charges are varied	2	2%
Need additional bus services / revenue should be invested in public and/or active transport	2	2%
Alternative or additional proposal(s) suggested	8	9%
Other comments		
Public/businesses are against this	6	7%
Other generally supportive comment	5	6%
Other generally unsupportive comment	4	5%
Other comment	9	10%
TOTAL	88	

NOTE: some comments were coded under multiple themes, therefore percentages add up to more than 100%.

Key concerns

The introduction of charges will be detrimental to the towns, high street, shops or businesses (42 mentions / 48%)

“Sudbury Town Council is shocked by the proposal to increase parking charges in Sudbury and the other towns and villages. The Town Council met on 2 January 2024 and unanimously resolved that the retention of 3-hours free parking in Sudbury is vital to sustain the local economy and is non-negotiable.

Together, Hadleigh and Sudbury comprise the economic heart of Babergh District with a third of Babergh residents living within 5 miles of the town centre businesses. Parking charges are not just an issue for the people who live in these towns, but also for all those travelling in from the surrounding villages and rural parishes. The current 3-hours free parking encourages longer stays and unplanned spending in our towns. Our towns’ increasing experience economy (restaurants, cafes, hairdressers, beauty treatments, nail bars, etc) relies on extended dwell time. This is only possible if they are not worried about exceeding their parking time limit and the current 3 hours free parking allows reasonable time for this style of visit. Any reduction in free parking will damage business confidence and make the recovery from the current economic crisis all the more difficult. For many families there is no realistic alternative to using a car to visit town and this will only increase their costs and discourages visits. This is not the right time to gamble with our future.”

(Town/Parish Council)

“I am very concerned at the risk to services in the event that parking charges are not implemented. However I do feel that Sudbury is not yet ready to take the removal of parking charges. Sudbury has a lot more to offer than free parking but needs more time to build on its shopping and visitor experience.”

(Other group/organisation)

“I strongly feel that now is not the right time to be bringing in these proposals. Our market towns are slowly recovering from the devastating effects of Covid, having been out in Sudbury gathering car park users views on the subject the majority of respondents said that parking charges would mean they would either shop elsewhere, cut down on the amount of times they visited or limit the amount of time they spent in the town centre. This in my view would put the many independent businesses in Sudbury at risk of closure which will not benefit any area of Babergh.”

(District Councillor)

“Concerned this will drive people out of the towns and villages to larger shopping sites where parking is free. I believe all locals are passionate about supporting small shops and businesses and especially the market in Sudbury on Thursdays and Saturdays. If parking charges are introduced, I fear this might be to the detriment of these businesses.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“A substantial majority of respondents to our survey believe that varying parking charges will have a negative effect on trade in the town centre and on the town in general. Several mentioned that on-street parking is likely to rise as people seek to avoid paying a fee. While the unusual benefit of free parking for up to three hours is appreciated, the prevailing view is that this is a key factor in making Hadleigh a desirable destination for visitors travelling from beyond the immediate location. We found a substantial number of visitors who choose to travel at least five miles because they see Hadleigh as attractive, at least in part because they can park for free.”

(District Councillor)

“We cannot be convinced that the varying of parking charges will not have a detrimental impact on the high street businesses - we only have to look at Ipswich town centre. The lack of affordable parking and the removal of numerous free parking spaces will have contributed to the demise of the town centre.”

(Town/Parish Council)

“...[The] removal of free parking will have a direct impact on the level of support Hadleigh high street currently enjoys, and that like so many other town centres that have become deserted due to lack of footfall, that this will ultimately have a bigger (and negative) impact on the economy than the savings made by introducing parking fees.”

(Other group/organisation)

“Cabinet are prepared to risk the economy of are two Market Towns at a time we are suffering a cost of living crisis and have entered a recession, you have not carried out a study or produced any evidence to back up your claim that changing tariffs will have no effect. Markets in our two Towns are essential not only from an economic point of view but also from a community and health and wellbeing point of view they are places where communities can meet, especially the elderly, we must protect them not destroy them, Market Traders are hanging on and fear any change in tariffs will be the final straw for them.”

(District Councillor)

“Free parking in our active towns has always been enjoyed by locals and visitors alike. Both these groups must be assumed to spend money in the towns. If we are to preserve our towns then maintenance footfall must be maintained. Increased business rates have already driven many retail outlets from our towns.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

Free parking represents an important benefit for households and certain groups (e.g. elderly and vulnerable residents, staff and volunteers) (15 mentions / 17%)

"I am totally against this proposal. Free parking in these towns and villages are a must in this time of financial pressure on households."

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

"BDC also seem at risk of forgetting they serve an above average number of elderly residents. How many of those using the free car parks are elderly, who have made use of the chance to spend what could have been parking money on a coffee with friends in a small local business? With pensions under growing strain with the cost of living, how many could afford both parking and coffee? How many would then become isolated, and potentially increase demand on adult social care? Perhaps the £421k cost is a cheaper alternative to that scenario."

(Town/Parish Council)

"Great Cornard is the second largest ward in Babergh but it is mostly housing with very few amenities meaning residents have no choice but to go into Sudbury for most of their needs. It is too far out to be a comfortable walking distance for most people, especially if you factor in bags of shopping, children or health issues. Our bus services have been decimated over the last 10 years, the few buses we still have are notoriously unreliable. Many parts of Great Cornard are deprived areas, this will be an unfair tax on some of our poorest residents."

(District Councillor)

"At Lavenham, the main public car park is shared with the Long Melford Doctors surgery, Public Library, Village Hall, Play School, Recycling area, Electric Vehicle Charging Stations and used by visitors to the church, pub etc. It would be unreasonable to charge patients/clients of the Doctors surgery parking area and difficult to prevent anyone else from using this parking area if parking in the remainder of the car park required payment."

(Town/Parish Council)

"The main employers in Lavenham are retail and catering. Both sectors are characterised by minimum wage and slightly above minimum wage levels. These employers are unable to hire staff from within the village (by observation a sizeable proportion of Lavenham is aged over 65) and so there is a considerable amount of commuting to Lavenham by those who are not highly paid. The imposition of car parking charges on these employees will either significantly raise costs for local businesses or significantly reduce the take-home pay of their employees. There is therefore real possibility that some businesses may cease trading."

(Town/Parish Council)

“Although we run a bus collection/delivery scheme, we do have service users (adults with learning and physical disabilities) that arrive by car as some are from outlying villages and come with a 1-2-1 carer. We would like you to ensure that this is taken into consideration when setting any parking charges... Not all are entitled to a blue badge.”

(Other group/organisation)

“We do not feel that our visitor numbers will drop significantly if charges are introduced. Our biggest concerns will be for staff who are already paying £3 per day to park - any uplift in this will cause financial anxiety and also for our volunteers on whom we rely on heavily. Currently we have volunteers that will be onsite for 2.5 hours as they can park for free for 3 hrs. If they have to pay then we will no doubt see a reduction in volunteer hours which could be very detrimental to our organisation and to the wellbeing of those volunteers, some of whom use volunteering as a way of coping with grief etc. If there could be consideration given to this (perhaps some sort of annual, monthly, weekly, daily season tickets available) it would be appreciated.”

(Other group/organisation)

Rural communities and/or lack of public transport means residents need to use cars/car parking to access shops/services/town centres (14 mentions / 16%)

“The current free parking with restricted time is an attraction when deciding where to shop or do business. Sudbury and Hadleigh are a greater attraction than Colchester or Ipswich. The declining public bus service with few return journeys each day mean that car transport is still paramount.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“Many businesses depend on the villages around the towns for income. People come in to town to browse such shops as are left, and in many cases to stop for coffee, and sometimes lunch. One has to drive; many of these people are retired and have no alternative transport, they cannot cycle, and public transport is almost useless these days.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“Whilst the desire to improve sustainable transport is to be commended, BDC seem to forget the fact that these towns support very rural communities. Walking is not an option. Cycling is not an option for most. And many villages do not have a bus service at all, let alone to these towns.”

(Town/Parish Council)

The introduction of charges will negatively impact on-street parking (12 mentions / 14%)

“It would also encourage other drivers to drive about looking for a free roadside space and clutter the streets beyond the town centre, increasing pollution and road safety hazards”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“Every time parking charges are introduced, cars will be parked all around the town in narrow streets, outside people’s houses, on corners even, and exacerbating the all day parking such as around the Croft area and at the end of Quay Lane. Public wanting to use the Quay, the Jetty etc often have trouble finding a parking space due to all day parkers who won’t pay in a car park.”

(Town/Parish Council)

“The impact of charging is likely to be particularly significant in Lavenham where the close mix of houses and commercial premises in the centre, many dwellings without parking, could, particularly in the tourist season, lead to difficult on-street problems unless sensitively managed.”

(Town/Parish Council)

“Although I fully understand the need to introduce parking fees from a financial justification, I am very concerned that if this is done to a rural car park in a very small village that it will merely encourage people to park in the high street and there is nothing to prevent this at the moment. We need to encourage locals to regularly use the car park, not to deter them. So unless some regulation is introduced to prevent people parking in the main street, then I am against introducing any fee for use of the car park.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

Introduction of charges will negatively impact supermarket parking provision (6 mentions / 7%)

“If charges are introduced I foresee people leaving their cars in Morrison’s / Q.D. car park and walking to the High Street which will lead to the overcrowding of their car park. This in turn may lead to the imposition of time limits in their car parks but as this is difficult to monitor it is likely that only extreme cases would be penalised.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“Removal of free parking in the surrounding car parks may cause more people to park in the Waitrose free car park, and we are concerned that less-mobile residents may need to park further away. Parking charges may also increase the number of visitors using Aldi car park, potentially causing a queue of traffic on the main road leading to its car park.”

(Town/Parish Council)

Introduction of charges will negatively impact / deter users of Kingfisher Leisure Centre (5 mentions / 6%)

“In the event that this proposal goes ahead I would ask that the 3 free hour parking is retained in the Kingfisher car park for those using this facility as this is key to people's health and well being and in some cases their actual survival.”

(Other group/organisation)

“Kingfisher Leisure Centre is the closest leisure centre facility... Removal of free parking would increase the cost of visiting the Kingfisher Leisure Centre, which would have impacts on the health and well-being of... residents of all ages.”

(Town/Parish Council)

Queries and challenges around the basis of the proposal

There is a lack of information/clarity around the cost figures quoted / 425K figure is considered misleading (14 mentions / 16%)

“Thus far there has been insufficient information justifying the claims that subsidised parking costs £425K and rising.

I am sympathetic to the notion that introducing a short term charging regime might help the Council meet its obligation to deliver a balanced budget but the lack of explanation around the make up of current costs to Councillors outside of Cabinet means I cannot easily evidence the compunction to introduce charging.”

(District Councillor)

“The apparent costs of £425k include rates, a portion of which are retained by Babergh. It is misleading in the extreme to include this in the running costs and causes people to be highly sceptical of the justification if you cannot present the reason for the charges in a transparent way.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“I feel if they start to charge it WILL affect the shops and what I want to know is why hasn't Babergh Council been more transparent about how much the carparks cost to run, instead they have just made up a figure as an overall price.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“...I appreciate the cost increases all round but I do not believe these carparks cost £440,000 per year to run... I need the evidence of these car park costings as this figure makes no sense to me at all...”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

Do not agree with the rationale / running costs should not be seen as a subsidy / role of the council is to support residents and businesses (10 mentions / 11%)

“You say that introducing these parking charges would mean the cost burden is removed from those in the district that don't use the car parks. To us that is completely at odds with one of the purposes of a Council. We pay our Council Tax knowing that it goes into services we don't all use, such as social housing, education and adult social care. Will you be taking the same stance with those services to reduce the burden of them? We think not.”

(Town/Parish Council)

“The support of the custom of car owners to town shops benefits non - car owners, who have the ability to do business in those shops. If those shops close due to lack of custom, this will of course be to the detriment of town dwellers. Within that context the argument, that free car parking is “subsidised” by all council tax payers, fails.”

(Town/Parish Council)

The council says that parking is subsidised to the tune of £425k this year and is increasing YoY. Instead of looking at this as a subsidy, they should look at it as a cost of doing business. The free parking encourages people to come to the towns and spend money in the shops, which allows the council to charge the shops rates, some of which is income to the council. Has the council modelled the consequential impact on implementing parking charges on the long-term impact to the shops? Are there any other councils where this change has been made and if so what was the impact?

(Town/Parish Council)

“Whilst it is true that free car parking is subsidised by all council tax payers it must be recognised that in Babergh 88% of households have a car (Census 2021) and therefore the subsidy from those who do not own a car is less than in many other areas. Any suggestion that lower income groups are subsidising more affluent car owners is hard to make. The situation is not as is in more urban areas. The bus service is extremely limited and does not serve some smaller villages at all. Reliance on public transport is therefore difficult or impossible. In our view this point is weak.”

(Town/Parish Council)

Savings should or could be found from elsewhere instead (9 mentions / 10%)

“I believe the current free parking should be maintained to help encourage shoppers into the towns concerned. If you want to save money, cut the wages and pension contributions of your Senior Leadership Team.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

The other option of NOT charging and determining what services should be cut does not seem to have been explored or certainly hasn't been determined.

(District Councillor)

“Rates are going up so use money from that.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

Lack of information about the proposals (including level of the charges being proposed) (6 mentions / 7%)

“We are OPPOSED to any variation in parking arrangements until a specific proposal is put before us and we would expect that to be consistent with Babergh's Parking Strategy published in 2022.

In order to examine any emergent proposal and the full extent of the underlying reasons for it, we would welcome the proposal being supported by detailed analysis of the financial and economic case, the proposed tariff collection system and the enforcement arrangements.”

(Other group/organisation)

“No clear proposal on parking charges, free parking times, review mechanism, cost of enforcement and overall cost/benefit analysis... Difficult to make constructive comments with so little information.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“We would like to know what the specific recommendations regarding charging will be in order to better assess the impact on [our] residents. We would welcome another consultation period with an opportunity to feed back on specific suggestions.

(Town/Parish Council)

The cost of collection and/or parking enforcement is significant / enforcement costs could be greater than the funds collected (6 mentions / 7%)

“Implementing parking charges is not a simple matter of turning on the meters. It will require people to monitor the cars and issue tickets. This a team of people to be employed and managed with all the consequential costs of that. In addition, fines for nonpayment of a tickets will have to be issued and collected and nonpayment of those dealt with. Has the council considered all of those costs in the financial modelling and, if so, can we see the model, please?”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“I oppose the imposition of charges and question the statement that you will keep it as low as possible as you may find the costs of collection are greater than anticipated and charges will be revised upwards.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

Rationale for varying the charges

Charging is necessary to cover costs / offset financial pressures / protect other council services (8 mentions / 9%)

"I believe small and reasonable charges, seen in almost every town, would be a fair way of covering the costs of this service."

(District Councillor)

"I am in agreement with this proposal. It is necessary to help balance future budgets and prevent the council getting into substantial and damaging financial difficulties."

(District Councillor)

"Beachside parks, parking in Ipswich, football parking and even hospitals charge for parking regardless of how little time one spends there."

I appreciate that these views will be very unpopular with the vast majority of people but there is already a pay system in place for longer term parking and it would be irresponsible for B.D.C. to forego the potential income from short term parking particularly when it is costing so much to subsidise."

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

Car park users should pay for parking facilities (rather than all council taxpayers) (5 mentions / 6%)

"Should householders who do not own cars or people who don't use such car parks be subsidising (via their council tax) three-hour free car parking in Hadleigh?"

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

"Car parking and roads use a disproportionate amount of public space when compared to their benefit to the public and those that contribute to their upkeep. Car park users should make a contribution to this benefit they receive."

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

Key considerations

Retaining a period of free parking (18 mentions / 20%), specifically:

- At least 30 minutes of free parking (2 mentions / 2%)
- At least 1 hour of free parking (13 mentions / 15%)
- At least 1.5 hours of free parking (1 mention / 1%)
- Retaining at least 2 hours of free parking (2 mentions / 2%)

“The proposed scheme is ill considered because of the detrimental effect on the High Street businesses. I could support a scheme which allowed free parking for a reduced time, say 30 mins but I cannot support the current proposals.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“The consequence of introducing a parking charge will be that, drivers looking to use shops on the High Street, will drive directly to Morrisons and QD if they can't find parking on the High Street. Half an hour or one hour's free parking will mean that drivers are likely to buy their newspaper or make a quick shop in the Co-op or Andrews, for example, rather than go to Morrisons or QD.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“I am strongly opposed to the imposition of across the board parking charges, I do accept we have to do something to offset the financial deficit, therefore I propose bringing in parking charges but with the first hour free.”

(District Councillor)

“A free hour would help support the high street and dissuade everyone from just heading to a supermarket car park to do their shopping...”

(Town/Parish Council)

“Although I understand the reasons for varying the tariffs in Babergh car parks I am concerned that if there was no free parking at all it might harm businesses on Hadleigh High Street. If some free parking, of perhaps the first hour, could be considered I feel it would help to support these businesses. This would allow people to visit a few shops, the market on a Friday, the Post Office or Library. It wouldn't help support the many independent cafes though.”

(District Councillor)

Ensuring that any charges are kept low / to a minimum (15 mentions / 17%)

“As long as charges are kept as low as possible and so affordable for all car drivers I support the proposal.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“Free parking for 3 hours or more at each of these sites is a very useful concession to attract people to the towns. If the Council decide it must impose charges then it is hoped the introduction of charges would be modest and allow people to be able to decide how long they wish to stay by a range of charges per hour.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“It must be recognised that Lavenham is a village and not a town. As referred to above its retail offer cannot be compared to Sudbury or Hadleigh and therefore any charges introduced cannot be comparable. Any similarity of parking tariffs and hours of operation is inappropriate.”

(Town/Parish Council)

“[Our] residents do use Hadleigh for shopping and social purposes and so would be affected by parking charges as there is no public transport route to Hadleigh. If the parking fees were minimal and paying for them easy to do then any objection would be remediated by saving other more essential services. However if charges were higher this could reduce the number of people visiting Hadleigh and we would not wish to see a reduction in Hadleigh's retail outlets.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

Ensuring that coin/cash payment facilities are retained (6 mentions / 7%)

“Also, how will parking charges be collected? I think it's essential that a cash option is available. Many elderly people have difficulty with payment methods. Some may also be able to handle card payments and those should be available too. But smartphone payments will be beyond many people so please don't rely on that.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“Please make sure that any parking payment facilities still have the coin facility, there are many elderly residents who will not be able to pay by phone apps and not all have bank cards.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

Additionally, several respondents put forward alternative or additional proposals:

“We feel strongly that a free parking period of at least one hour should remain. We also think that free parking should be considered at other times. This could take the form of an after school period to support young families, or making Thursdays free in order to support the market and encourage people to purchase local produce and support local small businesses.”

(Town/Parish Council)

“I would want to see preferred rates for disabled, families and village residents.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“Offer more long stay parking for people working in Sudbury at reasonable rates. Keep free parking in villages such as Lavenham & Long Melford.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“It is worth noting that the main street in Hadleigh has no parking single lines Mon-Sat. These are normally ignored. Enforcement with fines would offset some of the cost of free parking.

The bold step would be to introduce a one way traffic flow to Hadleigh. Add more parking bays with 30mins free parking and enforce over stays. Then apply as above free one hour in carparks. This would make Hadleigh more attractive as a shopping and leisure destination.”

(Town/Parish Council)

“There should be more restrictions and greater enforcement against High Street parking [in Hadleigh] by more double yellow lines and a campaign to retain the Bridge Street car park to compensate for the loss of any spaces.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“...if parking charges for short stays were to be imposed then they should be accompanied by a season ticket system, permitting residents of Babergh to make a one-off payment to provide them with the existing three hour free parking. Once the payment had been made, there would then be no incentive for residents to minimise their use of the town centres.”

(Town/Parish Council)

“Does this mean the district council tax payers will see a reduction in council tax? If not maybe they could have a card to allow free parking for a limited period?”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“Introducing carpark charges will reduce this shortfall but by how much remains to be modelled. We need to see what could be brought in by modelling different levels of carpark charging which should include one model with a car parking permit for locals.

The alternate possibility of removing the cost of the car parks by handing over the car-parks to the town councils should also be looked at. If this is done as a CIC I gather that business rates do not need to be paid thereby reducing the majority of the cost of running the car-parks.”

(District Councillor)

Question 2: Current car park provision and facilities

Q2. CAR PARKING PROVISION

The Council published its Parking Strategy in 2022, which outlines both on-street and offstreet parking provision for the next 20 years. More information about the Parking Strategy is available on our website at <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/w/parking-strategy>

The Strategy looks at the improvement and maintenance of our parking provision to ensure that we have the right level of parking provision in the right places.

Do you have any comments on our current car park provision and facilities?

Fifty-nine respondents (69%) provided a response about on-street parking and parking enforcement. Percentages are shown based on all 86 survey respondents.

Some comments were coded under more than one theme. Percentages therefore add up to more than 100%.

Respondents provided a range of views on the current car park provision and facilities, including that:

- Current car parking provision / level of parking is good/adequate/fine (21 mentions / 24%).
- Current car parking provision is insufficient / inadequate (8 mentions / 9%).
- Car parks could be better maintained (e.g. better signage, markings, general maintenance, ticket machines not working) (8 mentions / 9%).

Additional comments also reiterated views related to the proposal, including that car parking should be left free / arrangements kept as they are / 3 hours parking is good for local businesses (8 mentions / 9%).

Respondents also highlighted a range of parking-related issues or queries, including some specific comments related to the Parking Strategy. This included several detailed comments relating to parking provision in Lavenham; whilst not reported in full within this section – due to the length and detail of responses – they will be reviewed in detail by Babergh District Council's Parking Services team.

Table 4 displays the full range of responses received to this question, coded by theme.

The remainder of this section includes illustrative quotes related to the most frequently mentioned themes related to car parking provision and facilities.

Table 4: Q2. Car parking provision and facilities – coded responses

	Count	%
Car parking provision and facilities		
Current car parking provision / level of parking is good/adequate/fine	21	24%
Current car parking provision is insufficient / inadequate	8	9%
Car parks could be better maintained (e.g. better signage, markings, general maintenance, ticket machines not working)	8	9%
Car parks are well-used	4	5%
Car parks are well maintained	3	3%
Other generally positive comment	3	3%
Comments related to the proposal		
Car parking should be left free / arrangements kept as they are / 3 hours parking good for local businesses	8	9%
Introducing charges will increase on-street parking	4	5%
Free / current parking provision encourages car use / discourages active travel	3	3%
Further parking-related issues and queries		
On-street / pavement parking issues	7	8%
More parking for Blue Badge holders	3	3%
Resident parking should be considered on some streets	2	2%
Wider availability of season tickets	2	2%
Other individual queries / issues (including specific comments relating to the Parking Strategy)	11	13%
Other comments		
Other comment	4	5%
<i>No comment / left blank</i>	27	31%
TOTAL	86	

NOTE: some comments were coded under multiple themes, therefore percentages add up to more than 100%.

Car parking provision and maintenance

Current car parking provision / level of parking is good/adequate/fine (21 mentions / 24%)

“The parking provision in Sudbury is currently very good.”

(District Councillor)

“There is plenty of parking available in Sudbury. As someone that drives in most days... it is very rare for me to struggle to find a parking space.”

(Other group/organisation)

“Current parking provision in these areas is adequate in my opinion.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“The current parking provision and facilities are seen as exemplar and playing a significant role in facilitating a vibrant town centre in Hadleigh.”

(Other group/organisation)

“Hadleigh has a reasonable amount of car parks, could possibly consider more on-street availability.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

Current car parking provision is insufficient / inadequate (8 mentions / 9%)

“The additional housing in Hadleigh has not been met with any growth in the infra-structure including the requirement for additional parking. It is noticeable that in the past there was always space in either of the two Magdalen Road car parks. Sometimes I find it necessary to drive between the two hoping to find somebody leaving. Charging by the hour may relieve the situation.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“There are plenty of 'First 2 or 3 hours free' car parks in Sudbury, but don't appear to be enough long term parking areas.”

(Town/Parish Council)

“Demand for parking in Lavenham fluctuates regularly and seasonally.

REGULARLY: Both car parks enjoy heavy use day time.

During the day, Prentice Street located closest to the High Street and Market Place is thought to be used by employees, shoppers, and visitors. Overnight, there is evidence that some residents have resorted to using this space because of poor availability near their homes.

The Cock Inn due to its location is also used throughout a 24 hour period. In the day time, employees, users of the village hall site who cannot be accommodated in the limited space that Community resource is able to provide, shoppers, patients, attendees to Church (sometimes in large numbers for funerals) and visitors park here. In the evenings, there is less demand and but it is thought that some residents use spaces overnight.

Frequently, overspill arises from this car park both during the day and evenings and this causes congestion on the B1071 and smaller streets accessed from this main road. This most commonly arises when there are cultural events at the Church or Village Hall with large attendances, monthly Farmers Market and especially where those dates, clash with sporting tournaments which take place at the Recreation Ground off Bridge Street Road.

SEASONALLY: Through tourism, Lavenham is fortunate to be a contributor to the overall economy of Babergh. Of the 3 Babergh settlements where variations to off-street parking is being focussed, Hadleigh, Sudbury and Lavenham, our village is the only one where traffic signs invite visitors, by provision of brown backed destination directional signage. Whilst welcome, this however brings added pressure to parking provision both on and off street day-time and overnight. By far, the majority of visitors arrive by car. Holiday accommodation is located in two hotels and holiday lets in the centre of the village, in narrow streets which generally do not have private parking.”

(Other group/organisation)

Car parks could be better maintained (e.g. better signage, markings, general maintenance, ticket machines not working) (8 mentions / 9%)

“The current car parking provisions should be kept as they are with no cost for parking, but the maintenance could be much better with shrub and tree areas being pruned more frequently and as far as I can remember the car parks in Sudbury have not been resurfaced in ten years.”

(Town/Parish Councillor)

“Carparks have for sometime been earmarked for line marking and new signage which were part of the Vision for Sudbury work and nothing has been delivered.”

(District Councillor)

“The current car parks in Hadleigh need attention with regard to re-painting markings and making one-way systems around them clearer (Magdalen Rd car park especially). At Magdalen Road car park there is also the issue of some trees having been fenced off because of their roots lifting the paving for a number of years. I don't want to lose the trees but it looks unsightly and is keeping parking spaces from being used.”

(District Councillor)

“Too often ticket machines inoperative. Even when free parking somewhat galling to have to walk to the far side to find working unit.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

Question 3: On-street parking and parking enforcement

Q3. ON-STREET PARKING

In 2020, Civil Parking Enforcement was introduced to the Babergh District, with Ipswich Borough Council and West Suffolk Council sharing the on-street parking enforcement duties. This has had a positive effect in many areas.

We understand that varying the tariffs in our car parks could impact on-street parking, but it could also mean that we could encourage more enforcement where required.

What comments would you like to make regarding on-street parking and parking enforcement?

Sixty-nine respondents (80%) provided a response about on-street parking and parking enforcement. Percentages are shown based on all 86 survey respondents.

Some comments were coded under more than one theme. Percentages therefore add up to more than 100%.

This included a number of responses about increased on-street parking and enforcement related to the proposal to vary parking tariffs, with respondents commenting that:

- Varying the charges will increase on-street parking / increase the need for on-street parking enforcement (19 mentions / 22%).
- Increasing enforcement will create/add to costs (10 mentions / 12%) or questioning the cost-benefit of enforcement (4 mentions / 5%).

Respondents also put forward views on on-street parking enforcement and restrictions more generally, including:

- That more enforcement is needed / would be welcomed (14 mentions / 16%).
- That more / better marked restrictions are needed (9 mentions / 10%).
- Positive comments about current levels of enforcement / enforcement generally (5 mentions / 6%).
- Mentions of on-pavement parking / need for enforcement (4 mentions / 5%).

The importance of access to on-street parking was also raised, including:

- The need to consider/prioritise parking for residents (including mention of resident permits) (9 mentions / 10%).
- The need to consider businesses / business deliveries (4 mentions / 5%) and the provision of on-street parking for Blue Badge users and residents with mobility issues (3 mentions / 3%).

Several respondents provided comments on specific local area issues.

Table 5 displays the full range of responses received to this question, coded by theme.

The remainder of this section includes illustrative quotes related to the most frequently mentioned themes.

Table 5: Q3. On-street parking – coded responses

	Count	%
Views towards on-street parking and enforcement related to the proposal		
Varying the charges will increase on-street parking / increase the need for on-street parking enforcement	19	22%
Increasing enforcement will create/add to costs	10	12%
Question about the cost-benefit of enforcement	4	5%
Retaining a free hour in the car parks / ensuring fees are kept low would help counter on-street parking	3	3%
Views towards on-street parking enforcement and restrictions		
More enforcement is needed / would be welcomed	14	16%
More / better marked/signed restrictions needed	9	10%
Positive comment about current levels of enforcement / enforcement generally	5	6%
Mention of on-pavement parking / need for enforcement	4	5%
Parking enforcement should be fair and proportionate	3	3%
Importance of access to on-street parking		
Need to consider/prioritise parking for residents (including mention of resident permits)	9	10%
Need to consider businesses / business deliveries	4	5%
Provision of on-street parking for Blue Badge users and residents with mobility issues	3	3%
Importance of retaining free on-street parking to keep towns attractive	2	2%
Other comments		
Specific comment on local area issue	8	9%
Other comment	12	14%
<i>No comment / left blank</i>	17	20%
TOTAL	86	

NOTE: some comments were coded under multiple themes, therefore percentages add up to more than 100%.

On-street parking and enforcement – views related to the proposal

Varying the charges will increase on-street parking / increase the need for on-street parking enforcement (19 mentions / 22%)

“I do feel that there might be more 'opportunist' street parking to evade the charges causing more congestion within the high streets.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“If these proposals are brought in, I feel that on street parking will increase. Many of the streets near the town centre have no off street parking, even if parking permits are brought in there will still not be enough, many residents are forced to park overnight in the car parks. Unless you bring this in in every street people who know the area will find a street to park in to avoid the charges.”

(District Councillor)

“We believe that our users may well seek out free alternative parking around the locality of the Kingfisher Leisure Centre. While this may encourage users to walk more the impact on local residents living around the Station Road area could be significant. It is important for us a trusted local business that we do everything possible to limit environment and noise disruptions around our centres.”

(Other group/organisation)

“On street parking in Hadleigh is limited and can be occasionally chaotic at peak times. Limiting free parking in the two main car parks can only make matters worse and would require additional enforcement at the appropriate cost and aggravation to residents and visitors alike.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“Traders and service-providers on the [Hadleigh] High Street told us that improved enforcement in the past few years has reduced the number of casually parked vehicles near their premises. But current enforcement arrangements seem to be sporadic - it's felt by some that a considerable increase in enforcement presence would be needed to counteract the expected increase in on-street parking if car park fees are varied.”

(District Councillor)

Increasing enforcement will create/add to costs (10 mentions / 12%)

“It is inevitable that the ending of free parking in the council's car parks will cause an increase in on-street parking, particularly when someone is making a short trip into the town to buy a forgotten item of shopping or a very small purchase. More enforcement will mean more wardens or increased hours for existing ones, leading to increased cost to council tax payers.”

(Town/Parish Council)

“Clearly imposing charges on car parks will necessitate the need for more enforcement to control on-street parking. The additional cost of reinforcement could be high and will offset the income raised from Car Parks.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“The officers do patrol the centre of the town but if this came into effect they would have to patrol a much wider area as workers, volunteers and shoppers avoid charges. Its human nature to do so. You acknowledge that you may need more enforcement thus more officers, more costs thereby much of the income you may generate will not be of benefit. Laws of unintended consequence.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“Encouraging more enforcement” is liable to require additional personnel and therefore additional salary costs for the Council.”

(Town/Parish Council)

“Varying tariffs might result in more on-street parking, however this can be managed and planned for. The cost of enforcing on-street parking restrictions must be taken into consideration when varying the tariffs.”

(District Councillor)

Question about the cost-benefit of enforcement (4 mentions / 5%)

“Enforcement of on street parking is generally a good thing but the quantity of enforcement is directly linked to the cost. There should be a thorough cost benefit analysis before any change is made.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

On-street parking enforcement and restrictions

More enforcement is needed / would be welcomed (14 mentions / 16%)

AND More / better marked/signed restrictions needed (9 mentions / 10%)

“Yes! We need more on street enforcement! Trucks unloading is one thing. Maybe a private car parked for 1 minute to collect the weeks wine. But when you notice habitual long term parking in restricted places there are many like myself who have a desire to be a traffic warden.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

I welcome more parking enforcement. Hadleigh High Street can get very congested at times especially if people have parked inconsiderately creating problems for other drivers.

(District Councillor)

“Currently, enforcement is sporadic and restrictions in some places are not clearly signed.”

(Town/Parish Council)

“Enforcement is essential to a well managed strategy. However, rural areas lack any access to effective and ongoing enforcement.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“Parking enforcement is a must. We rarely/never see the Ipswich parking enforcement team, they refuse to penalise cars on our centre village white lines until the county council have put in correct parking signage/measures so we have dangerous parking in the centre of the village on our 90 degree bend which goes uncorrected.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“On-street parking enforcement has been ineffectual due to the lack of maintenance by SCC Highways particularly on road markings.”

(District Councillor)

“There are some streets with double yellow lines but those are in very poor condition. There has been negligible civil parking enforcement in Lavenham. Daily there are already parking infringements. Water Street is particularly noticeable.”

(Town/Parish Council)

Positive comment about current levels of enforcement / enforcement generally (5 mentions / 6%)

"I have noticed an increase in the enforcement of on street parking that has reduced congestion kerbside. I find the enforcement effective and proportionate."

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

"On-street parking enforcement seems entirely sensible; it must surely help prevent anti-social/nuisance parking, and may even encourage some drivers to leave their cars at home when making shorter journeys which could be made, instead, on foot or by bicycle."

(Town/Parish Council)

Mention of on-pavement parking / need for enforcement (4 mentions / 5%)

"Pavement parking is a very significant problem which arises from the [Lavenham] High Street being the A1141."

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

"We need a solution for pavement parking, but that requires government legislation."

(District Councillor)

Importance of access to on-street parking

Need to consider/prioritise parking for residents (including mention of resident permits) (9 mentions / 10%)

"If these proposals are brought in, I feel that on street parking will increase. Many of the streets near the town centre have no off street parking, even if parking permits are brought in there will still not be enough, many residents are forced to park overnight in the car parks. Unless you bring this in in every street people who know the area will find a street to park in to avoid the charges."

(District Councillor)

"Priority to residents should be given for on street parking including resident permits."

(Other group/organisation)

“On-street parking in this village [Lavenham] is needed by residents who do not have private parking opportunity attached to their properties. This presents a large proportion of residents in the centre of the village. Many of those residents are at home during the day. Provision on-street is also needed for shoppers day time.”

(Other group/organisation)

“The on-street parking enforcement is causing car owners to leave Hadleigh. There is no parking for many people living in the town.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

**Need to consider businesses / business deliveries (4 mentions / 5%)
AND provision of on-street parking for Blue Badge users and residents with mobility issues (3 mentions / 3%)**

“Councillors believe the introduction of any on-street parking restrictions particularly in Lavenham would be problematical for shops, pubs, restaurants and other businesses and discourage passing trade.”

(Town/Parish Council)

“Not enough provision for Blue Badge holders for on-street parking in Sudbury and Lavenham town centres.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“We run a meal delivery service to some of the most vulnerable members of the community and so it is important that we are able to stop on residential streets with ease to make the deliveries. For some staff that live in Sudbury, residents permits are important, but balance is needed to ensure access for us to make these crucial deliveries. Is there a permit scheme for short stop delivery purposes?”

(Other group/organisation)

Local area issues

Additionally, several respondents highlighted specific local area issues:

“...other areas of Sudbury take the full impact of restrictions which are implemented - this is usually a default of workers in Sudbury (or train users) needing to find non-charging places to park their vehicles all day without charge. This causes the town areas to be full of daily vehicles thus reducing space for visiting, spending, tourist and residential vehicles.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“Charging for parking in Sudbury, will have an adverse effect on Long Melford, known in Long Melford for many years as the LM Park & Ride, three or four cars park in our street then drive to Sudbury Railway Station where they pay one fee to park whilst commuting to London, people may well do similar to this and catch Public transport into Sudbury, thereby congesting our High street with no benefit to our High street traders.”

(District Councillor)

“Market Hill’s on-street parking is at times closed for events and we understand that this may soon be closed daily during the summer months which will significantly impact the availability of on-street parking. Closure of parking on Market Hill will particularly impact short visits to town centre shops and place greater reliance on the nearby car parks. Updated parking surveys would be sensible to determine whether there has been a change in car park usage since the initial surveys were carried out which we understand was during Covid.”

(Town/Parish Council)

“Bridge Street car park should be retained and developed.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“...[Lavenham] residents frequently park overnight in the car parks, likely because there is no space on the streets at the time residents return to their homes. Multi-vehicle ownership associated with individual dwellings has to be noted. In some streets, vehicle ownership is greater than on-street spaces.”

(Other group/organisation)

Question 4: Sustainable transport

Q4. SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

The Parking Strategy identified that many of our car parks are already approaching capacity and the demand on parking spaces will only increase without better access to sustainable transport solutions. This includes improving public transport, cycling, and walking facilities.

What comments would you like to make regarding sustainable transport, and what improvements would encourage and enable travel without the need for parking (therefore helping to manage the demand on our car parks)

Seventy-two respondents (84%) provided a response about sustainable transport. Percentages are shown based on all 86 survey respondents.

Some comments were coded under more than one theme. Percentages therefore add up to more than 100%.

Comments highlighted several transport-related issues and opportunities, including:

- That public transport / bus travel is limited and/or needs improvement (47 mentions / 55%).
- A lack of cycle paths / need for more cycle paths and/or that cycling on the roads is too dangerous (21 mentions / 24%).⁴
- Improvements to pedestrian routes / lack of safe walking routes (10 mentions / 12%).
- A need for bike parking facilities (6 mentions / 7%).

A number of respondents (12 mentions / 14%) stated that increasing sustainable transport options is unlikely to get people out of their cars, the culture change required is too great or public transport unlikely to ever improve enough.

Table 6 displays the full range of responses received to this question, coded by theme.

The remainder of this section includes illustrative quotes related to the most frequently mentioned themes.

⁴ Each of these were mentioned by the following number of respondents, with 5 respondents mentioning both: A lack of cycle paths / need for more cycle paths (15 mentions / 17%); Cycling on the roads is too dangerous (11 mentions / 13%).

Table 6: Q4. Sustainable transport – coded responses

	Count	%
Comments on sustainable transport issues and opportunities		
Public transport / bus travel is limited and/or needs improvement	47	55%
Lack of cycle paths / need more cycle paths	15	17%
Cycling on roads is too dangerous	11	13%
Improve pedestrian routes / lack of safe walking routes	10	12%
Bike parking facilities are needed	6	7%
Introduce 20mph schemes	4	5%
Free car parking or providing more spaces encourages car usage / charges may discourage car usage	4	5%
Reduce / divert lorries	2	2%
Bike / e-bike hire and loans	2	2%
Comments related to the viability of sustainable transport uptake		
Increasing sustainable transport options unlikely to get people out of their cars / culture change required is too great / public transport unlikely to ever improve enough	12	14%
Car travel is essential in a rural district	5	6%
Impractical to carry shopping any distance / carry shopping on the bus	3	3%
Other comments		
Sustainable transport is a separate issue from parking charges	2	2%
Other comment	14	16%
<i>No comment / left blank</i>	12	14%
TOTAL	86	

NOTE: some comments were coded under multiple themes, therefore percentages add up to more than 100%.

Sustainable transport issues and opportunities

Public transport / bus travel is limited and/or needs improvement (47 mentions / 55%)

“Improvement required in level of public transport, particularly in more rural areas.”

(Town/Parish Council)

“Improving village transport if you don't want people to use car parks. More buses and regular services which link up with buses to bigger towns.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“Public transport to and from outside villages is scarce or non-existent. It is absurd to suggest that people from those villages might walk or cycle to the town.”

(Town/Parish Council)

“Sustainable, regular and efficient transport services to and from satellite villages around Hadleigh don't exist. Private vehicles are essential for visiting Hadleigh.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“To provide regular and accessible public transport within the Babergh area, this is unfortunately an issue that is raised regularly within our village and neighbouring local villages between Hadleigh and Manningtree.”

(Town/Parish Council)

“Poor local bus service to some outlying villages mean car transport to Sudbury is essential.”

(Town/Parish Council)

“When I first moved to Cornard I could catch a bus at the top of my road every ten minutes, now it would mean a ten minute walk to get to the nearest bus stop, crossing my fingers to hope it turns up. For those people who need to go to the top of North Street this involves another lengthy walk the Sudbury end.”

(District Councillor)

Lack of cycle paths / need more cycle paths (15 mentions / 17%)

AND Cycling on roads is too dangerous (11 mentions / 13%)

AND Improve pedestrian routes / lack of safe walking routes (10 mentions / 12%)

“The state of road surfaces, distance to travel and the volume of traffic makes cycling and walking hazardous and does not allow parents with young children to make these journeys.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“It seems many users of the car parks on Hadleigh and Sudbury come a short distance within the town. Hopefully car park charges will encourage those who are mobile to walk or cycle instead. Free car parking does nothing to encourage active travel. Bike lanes and safe footpaths are key.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“Sustainable transport alternatives are not likely to be viable in Sudbury for many people in the foreseeable future. The roads feeding into Sudbury are too narrow and carry too much heavy traffic to be safe for cyclists. Most people, and especially children, will not consider cycling a safe method of travelling into Sudbury from the surrounding villages. Without safe cycle routes that are separated from the road traffic, there is not much likelihood of cycling becoming a credible alternative method of commuting into Sudbury.”

(Town/Parish Council)

“Better footpaths would encourage more walking especially from the new developments being built at Weavers Meadow in Hadleigh. To walk down Lady Lane into town pedestrians have to crisscross the road to stay on a pavement. There should be safe, attractive, sign posted walking and cycling options from these new developments all the way into the town centre which seem to be lacking at the moment.”

(District Councillor)

Bike parking facilities are needed (6 mentions / 7%)

“Secure bike parking facilities might encourage more people to cycle, particularly in good weather; however, the lack of anywhere safe and secure to leave bikes is a real issue particularly for owners of desirable bikes, especially e-assist bikes, which may be worth several thousand pounds. CCTV cameras at bike parking stands may help, but the real solution is secure bike compounds, such as can be found in central Cambridge next to a cycle shop.”

(Town/Parish Council)

The viability of sustainable transport uptake

Increasing sustainable transport options unlikely to get people out of their cars / culture change required is too great / public transport unlikely to ever improve enough (12 mentions / 14%)

“Increasing sustainable forms of transport is unlikely to have a great effect on the numbers of vehicles using the car parks even though there are charges levied.

The cost of bus fares is unlikely to change the attitudes of drivers to use these buses. Town centre parking is used by many shoppers who need the convenience of their cars for transporting their shopping.”

(Individual Town/Parish Councillor)

“Most of the Hadleigh trade is drawn from the surrounding villages where a complete vacuum in public transport exists. Whilst it is a laudable proposal to swap car traffic for public transport, that is surely even more out of reach than leaving the parking subsidised.

An increase in cycling and walking provision would of course be a positive step but in reality incremental in terms of relief of motor traffic.”

(Other group/organisation)

“Public transport is poor and would have to be hugely improved to have an impact on car use. Unfortunately Babergh does not have the power or funds to do this.”

(District Councillor)

“Sustainable transport can only be provided if there is a demand throughout the day, as it would not be a viable business case and it would not be long before the council would be having to go back to the public to raise taxes to pay for the transport.

The typical example is London. Transport for London is increasing rates to pay towards the transport system. There has to be at least a 40% travel demand throughout each day to be able to run a public service.”

(Other group/organisation)

Appendices

APPENDIX A: Background Information and Frequently Asked Questions

Parking tariffs in Babergh

Babergh District Council is proposing to vary parking charges in Sudbury, Hadleigh, Lavenham and Chelmondiston.

Subsidising the current three-hour free parking cost the Council approximately £425K this year, and that is set to rise further. The Council faces significant budget pressures in the next financial year and over the medium term and can no longer afford the subsidy if it is to continue delivering other essential services to residents and communities.

Our proposal is to introduce modest, revised tariffs in council-run car parks which are as low as possible compared to other authorities, so we can continue to attract visitors, ensure shoppers and workers have access to the right spaces in the right places, and increase space turnover.

This webpage outlines the background to the proposal, details of an engagement exercise we are carrying out, and answers to some frequently asked questions. Further background about the proposals can also be found in [a media release issued on 15 December 2023](#).

How much will you charge to park?

We already charge to park at Pin Mill Car Park in Chelmondiston, and for over three hours in Hadleigh and Sudbury. We are conducting extensive research throughout East Anglia to ascertain the average cost to park in towns and villages of a similar size to those in Babergh. We are committed to ensuring that the new charges that would be introduced to our car parks would be in line with other towns and villages of similar size in East Anglia.

How will you discourage shoppers from choosing to shop in larger towns in the area, such as Bury St Edmunds, Ipswich, or Colchester?

We are committed to keeping the cost of parking in our car parks lower than those charged in larger towns so that our towns and villages remain an attractive destination.

What solutions are available to prevent motorists from using other free car parks instead of Council-owned car parks, such as health centres, businesses and Residents Only car parks?

There are several solutions available to the operators of free car parks that are close to the Council's car parks. These include:

- Incorporating the car park into the Council's 'Off Street Parking Places Order' so that we can enforce the car park on the operator's behalf. Permits could be issued to authorised users.
- Car park operators can choose to enlist the service of a private enforcement service. These private services will often provide a fee-free service, using parking ticket income to cover their costs.

What will the Council do to stop motorists from parking on-street to avoid paying to use a car park?

We will work with Suffolk County Council to ensure that the on-street parking is relevant and appropriate for the needs of residents. We are committed to improving the facilities within our car parks to make them the preferred destination for motorists, by making them a safe, convenient, and pleasant place to park.

Will the introduction of car park charges affect on-street enforcement?

Chargeable parking is easier to enforce than free parking. With competitive parking rates in operation, we will be able to encourage a greater frequency of Civil Enforcement Officer visits to our car parks. This increased officer presence makes our car parks a safer place to park with increased patrols and means that the surrounding streets will also be more regularly patrolled which is currently a common complaint.

Will charging to park discourage visitors to our town centre?

There is little evidence to suggest that charging a competitive fee to park will prevent motorists from visiting a town or village. Babergh is in a minority of districts where parking is free for up to three hours.

Will tourists be discouraged from visiting our town or village if they must pay for parking?

In general, tourists are fully prepared to pay to park when visiting an area of interest. We are committed to ensuring that the fees charged in our car parks are competitive and may still be below what tourists would normally expect to pay when visiting a place of interest.

What do other towns in the region charge for parking?

The average cost of parking in towns with a population of around 20,000 people East Anglia is £1 per hour. Short stay car parking is payable in towns such as Stowmarket, Newmarket, Felixstowe, Haverhill, and Woodbridge. We will ensure that the cost of parking in Babergh is competitive with these destinations. Full tariff information for other council's car parks in the region are available their websites:

- [Mid Suffolk's car parks](#)
- [East Suffolk's car parks](#)
- [Ipswich's car parks](#)
- [Huntingdonshire's car parks](#)
- [Saffron Walden's car parks](#)

Will Blue Badge holders have to pay to park?

Blue Badge holders will continue to be entitled to park up to three hours for free.

Will there be any discounts available for town centre employees and residents?

We already offer car park season tickets which are available to anyone who regularly uses our car parks. Season tickets are currently available for three months or 12 months and offer a considerable discount when compared to paying daily. Season tickets are also convenient as the motorist doesn't have the inconvenience of having to pay to park each day. Season tickets are now fully digital and can be managed online.

Who are you currently engaging with about the changes?

In January, Babergh's Cabinet agreed to carry out an engagement exercise with town and parish councils and other recognised groups to find the best solutions for local communities. We have opened a survey aimed specifically at town and parish councillors as representatives of their local communities. It can also be completed by clerks and other recognised groups. It will build on previous feedback captured from residents and other stakeholders during [our Parking Strategy](#) consultation in 2022.

What will you do with the feedback?

The deadline for responses to the survey is Sunday 3 March 2024 and we will publish the results of this engagement on our website. The feedback will be reflected in proposals to be examined by our Overview and Scrutiny Committee before going to Cabinet for a final decision.

What are you asking in the survey?

These are the questions people are invited to answer:

Parking tariffs

The Council is proposing to vary the tariffs in our car parks to help tackle the financial deficit that we are facing to lessen the cuts or savings we will have to make to other services. At present, the free parking that is provided in our car parks in Sudbury, Hadleigh and Lavenham is subsidised by all council tax payers in the district.

We are committed to ensuring that the charges that would be introduced would remain as low as possible and in line with towns and villages of similar sizes across the East Anglia region.

What comments would you like to make regarding this proposal?

Car parking provision

The Council published its Parking Strategy in 2022, which outlines both on-street and off-street parking provision for the next 20 years. You can access more information about [our Parking Strategy](#) on our website.

The Strategy looks at the improvement and maintenance of our parking provision to ensure that we have the right level of parking provision in the right places.

Do you have any comments on our current car park provision and facilities?

On-Street parking

In 2020, Civil Parking Enforcement was introduced to the Babergh District, with Ipswich Borough Council and West Suffolk Council sharing the on-street parking enforcement duties. This has had a positive effect in many areas.

We understand that varying the tariffs in our car parks could impact on-street parking, but it could also mean that we could encourage more enforcement where required.

What comments would you like to make regarding on-street parking and parking enforcement?

Sustainable Transport

The Parking Strategy identified that many of our car parks are already approaching capacity and the demand on parking spaces will only increase without better access to sustainable transport solutions. This includes improving public transport, cycling, and walking facilities.

What comments or suggestions would you like to make regarding sustainable transport, and what improvements would encourage and enable travel without the need for parking (therefore helping to manage the demand on our car parks)?

APPENDIX B: Survey questionnaire

Babergh parking charges proposals: Your view

Introduction

We would like your feedback on Babergh District Council's plans to vary parking charges in Sudbury, Hadleigh, Lavenham and Chelmondiston.

Subsidising the current three-hour free parking in Sudbury, Hadleigh and Lavenham will cost the council approximately £425K this year, and those costs are set to rise further. We face significant budget pressures in the next financial year (2024/25) and can no longer afford the subsidy if we are to continue delivering other essential services to residents and communities.

We do not believe the success of town centres is defined by parking charges alone, but we do recognise there is concern about this proposal and there are challenges – which is why we want to engage with key stakeholders to minimise these and find solutions.

In January, Babergh's Cabinet agreed to carry out this engagement exercise.

This survey is aimed specifically at town and parish councils and district councillors as representatives of your local communities. It can be completed by clerks, district councillors and other recognised groups.

It will build on previous feedback captured from residents and other stakeholders during our Parking Strategy consultation in 2022.

The deadline for your responses is 3rd March 2024 and we will publish the results of this engagement on our website. You / your organisation will not be identified in any published reports unless you choose to give permission at the end of the survey for your responses to be attributable.

Your feedback will be reflected in proposals to be examined by our Overview and Scrutiny Committee before going to Cabinet for a final decision.

Thank you.

You can save your response at any point by clicking 'Save and Continue Later' at the bottom of the screen. You will be prompted to enter your email address so a link can be sent to you to allow you to return to your response.

Are you completing this survey...

- ... as a district councillor?
- ... as an individual town or parish councillor?
- ... on behalf of a town or parish council?
- ... on behalf of any other recognised group or organisation?

Please provide the following information

Your name _____

Email address _____

Name of council or group/organisation _____

Q1. PARKING TARIFFS

The Council is proposing to vary the tariffs in our car parks to help tackle the financial deficit that we are facing to lessen the cuts or savings we will have to make to other services. At present, the free parking that is provided in our car parks in Sudbury, Hadleigh and Lavenham is subsidised by all council tax payers in the district.

We are committed to ensure that the charges that would be introduced would remain as low as possible and are in line with towns and villages of a similar size across the East Anglian region.

What comments would you like to make regarding this proposal?

Q2. CAR PARKING PROVISION

The Council published its Parking Strategy in 2022, which outlines both on-street and offstreet parking provision for the next 20 years. More information about the Parking Strategy is available on our website at <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/w/parking-strategy>

The Strategy looks at the improvement and maintenance of our parking provision to ensure that we have the right level of parking provision in the right places.

Do you have any comments on our current car park provision and facilities?

Q3. ON-STREET PARKING

In 2020, Civil Parking Enforcement was introduced to the Babergh District, with Ipswich Borough Council and West Suffolk Council sharing the on-street parking enforcement duties. This has had a positive effect in many areas.

We understand that varying the tariffs in our car parks could impact on-street parking, but it could also mean that we could encourage more enforcement where required.

What comments would you like to make regarding on-street parking and parking enforcement?

Q4. SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

The Parking Strategy identified that many of our car parks are already approaching capacity and the demand on parking spaces will only increase without better access to sustainable transport solutions. This includes improving public transport, cycling, and walking facilities.

What comments would you like to make regarding sustainable transport, and what improvements would encourage and enable travel without the need for parking (therefore helping to manage the demand on our car parks)?

You can choose to upload any supporting documentation below

DOCUMENT UPLOAD

You / your organisation will not be identified in any published reports unless you choose to give permission for your responses to be attributable

- Please treat my response as anonymous in any published reports
- I am happy for my response to be attributed in any published reports

Finally, would you be happy to be contacted by Babergh District Council to discuss any of the issues raised in your response?

- Yes
- No

