

**THE BOROUGH OF SWALE
(OFF-STREET PARKING PLACES)
(VARIATION No. 10) ORDER 2026**

**Objections Received During the Consultation for changes to the Variation 10
from 5th December 2025 until 5th January 2026**

During the consultation period we received, 70 objections plus 6 Petitions with a total of 3,929 and 9 comments in total, there were no indications of Support.

These have been broken down into individual schemes where possible and cover the Proposal to change the use of the Little Oyster Minster on Sea, Halfway Car Park, Park Road and Library Car Park, Queenborough, Grafton Road Car Park, Sittingbourne and Front Brents Car Park, Faversham to a Pay and Display & or Pay by Phone parking facility and introduce parking Charges.

37 objections from individuals/organisations were received, with a further 3 objections via petition (totalling 3,445 signatories) and 3 Comments were received to the Introduction of Charges

The objections covered a broad range of topics but key themes raised were:

Impact on Residents

Concerns about the impact on residents parking covered several issues including the loss of overnight parking, where off-street locations are currently used to provide relief from congested on-street locations. Additionally, there were concerns about the additional financial strain for residents having to pay to park near their homes.

Impact on Local Economy

Another core issue raised was the impact to local businesses and the wider local economy, with the proposals being perceived as a short-term measure to generate revenue which risks creating long-term harm to local economic vitality, undermining small businesses and community hubs. One objection recommended allowing 1 hour of free parking in all proposed car parks to reduce the impact on businesses that rely on 'quick-stop' customers.

Financial Viability

Several objections questioned the financial viability of the scheme and a perceived lack of transparency. Objections suggest that the Council won't be able to break even in the first one to three years and question whether there is any point making such changes now as Local Government Reorganisation may make long-term revenue generating schemes obsolete.

Congestion and Highway Safety

Highway congestion and reduced highway safety, particularly at peak times and surrounding schools were prevalent in objections raised. Objections state that motorists will choose not to pay for parking which will increase levels of on-street congestion and create unsafe conditions for both motorists and pedestrians.

Equalities

Disproportionate impact on certain social groups was also raised, particularly with reference to two groups, the elderly and disabled motorists. Objections suggest that the proposals will cause disproportionate harm to these two groups by reducing their ability to access key services.

Ship-on-Shore

Further comments included comparisons to Ship-on-Shore, with objections believing that recent changes made there were unsuccessful and only led to increased congestion due to an increase in motorists choosing to park on the highway rather than pay to park off-street.

Previous Consultation Results

Objections also mentioned that a consultation for this proposal had been carried out recently and was unsuccessful and that the Council reintroducing the same proposal undermines public consultation.

Challenges to the Legal Basis for Implementing Parking Charges

Challenges to the legality of the proposals have also been made, with several references made to the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the restrictions it imposes on Council's for the conditions where charges for parking can be introduced and what the funds must be used for.

We also received comments as detailed below:

1. Petition 1: "Formal Objection – THE BOROUGH OF SWALE (OFF STREET PARKING PLACES) (VARIATION NO. 10) ORDER 2026 PROPOSAL"
2. "Increased traffic congestion and gridlock - the proposal will inevitably push more drivers to seek free on-street parking, significantly increasing congestion - especially around school drop off and pick up times. These areas already struggle with heavy traffic, and further displacement from car parks will worsen the situation."
3. "Loss of business for local traders. Introducing or increasing charges will deter people from visiting local shops, takeaways, restaurants and essential services. Reduced footfall will directly harm small businesses that are already under pressure."
4. "Higher costs for residents, workers and visitors. These charges will make everyday activities - shopping, picking up food, meeting friends, or going to work - more expensive. This is particularly unfair during a cost of living crisis when many families are already struggling."
5. "Lack of transparency around income, costs and financial assumptions. There is insufficient clarity regarding projected gross income, estimated costs and expected losses. Current evidence indicates that set-up costs for each car park are around £8000, significantly higher than the forecast revenue in the first year. Furthermore, by year 3 - when the scheme claimed to be financially viable - Swale Borough Council will no longer exist, making the rationale for his investment unclear."

6. "Increased road safety risks. One of the affected car parks is located close to a school. Additional traffic movements, reduced visibility and pressure for alternative parking increase the risk of accidents involving children."
7. "Strong public opposition. A petition containing over 2800 signatures objecting to these charges has been submitted. This demonstrates significant local concern and a clear lack of public support for the proposal."

19 objections, 4 Comments and 3 petitions with a total of 484 signatories were received in relation to proposed changes in Queenborough on the grounds of:

Impact on Local Economy

If proposals go ahead, the impact on local businesses is perceived as negative overall, with objections concerned about a decrease in footfall and tourism due to the introduction of charges.

Specific reference was made to certain local businesses already planning on addressing the impact of introducing parking fees by having to increase their costs, leading to an overall increased cost to the local community wanting to support local businesses.

Impact on Resident Parking

Concerns about the availability of parking for residents were also raised, with objections stating that parking is already at a premium in residential areas. Additionally, the impact on residents safety is perceived as negative due to objections anticipating an increase in motorists attempting to park on already narrow and congested streets leading to more unsafe conditions for motorists and pedestrians.

It was highlighted that the current free car parks are used heavily by residents, with one objection specifying that there are 27 houses in the High Street alone that have double yellow lines outside their properties. Parking was also identified as being limited on North Road and Railway Terrace, with one objection suggesting that removing the free car parks will force residents to compete for already oversubscribed on-street space and "increase the... [existing] parking conflicts between residents".

Leisure and Wellbeing / Equalities

The car parks are also seen as being vital to leisure and wellbeing, with particular mention being made Queenborough Library. Objections also included reference to limiting the ability of local residents, particularly those with protected characteristics of accessing key services.

Objections specifically highlight the local community centre which supports the "elderly and lonely with lunches and hosts classes for both adults and children", suggesting that implementing charges will make it harder for people to access these services, particularly those who are just picking up/dropping off.

Objections once again raised the financial viability of the scheme and a perceived lack of transparency. Objections suggest that the Council won't be able to break even in the first one to three years and question whether there is any point making

such changes now as Local Government Reorganisation may make long-term revenue generating schemes obsolete.

We also received comments as detailed below:

1. Petition 2: "Petition to Stop Parking Charges at Castle Connections

We, the undersigned, call upon the relevant local authorities and management of Castle Connections to immediately halt the introduction of parking charges at the Castle Connections site.

Castle Connections is a vital community hub that provides essential services, activities and social opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds. Introducing parking fees would:

- Place an unfair financial burden on vulnerable individuals, including elderly residents. Carers, and families on low incomes.
- Discourage attendance at community events, clubs and support sessions.
- Negatively impact the local economy and social cohesion by reducing footfall and community engagement.

Free and accessible parking has always been a key part of what makes Castle Connections welcoming and inclusive. Charging for parking risks undermining this spirit of community and could lead to isolation for those who rely on the centre most.

We therefore urge decision-makers to keep parking free at Castle Connections and protect the accessibility and community spirit that the centre stands for."

2. "This will cause problems for refuse collections emergency vehicles and delivery vehicles"
3. "Even worse than what you are already doing is the effect of your parking proposals on the normal day to day lives of the residents of Queenborough. The current free car parks are mostly used by actual residents who live there to park. There are 27 houses in the High St alone that have double yellow lines outside. Parking is also limited on North Road and Railway terrace. Every day there are constant battles for residents to find a space to park near their home - the car parks provide a last resort, but sadly are used every night by residents who cannot find space. No resident should have to be buying parking tickets to simply come home and park their car, this will increase the already parking conflicts between residents, make life much harder and worsen the effects of the cost of living crisis."

7 objections and 1 Comment were received in relation to proposed changes in Halfway on the grounds of:

Local Economy

Many objections refer to the potential negative impact on local small businesses heavily reliant on 'quick-stop' or 'pop-in' visits (such as collecting prescriptions or quick purchases). They outline that if a minimum paid stay is required at Halfway car

park, customers may avoid using these businesses, subsequently eroding both footfall and revenue.

One objection refers to the Halfway car park as a “hub for local residents and all the surrounding businesses, and their employees”, echoing concerns that the introduction of parking charges will have a severe negative impact on local businesses and their employees. The objection suggests that “the damage to the local business community will far outweigh any revenue from car park charges”.

Furthermore, objections suggested that this negative impact will also apply to local tourism, with the “incentive of a free day out at the seaside” being taken away.

Other objections also highlighted that if businesses are forced to close due to the impact of introducing parking charges, then the Council will receive less in business rates, potentially working out at a net loss to the Council.

Specific concerns were made by businesses who offer free parking to their staff in Halfway Car Park and would either have to take on the additional financial cost or pass the cost on to employees if they want to continue providing staff parking if charges are introduced.

School Safety

School safety and congestion around schools was raised as a core issue, particularly surrounding Halfway Houses Primary School. The introduction of charges is expected to push drop-offs and pick-ups onto Minster Road and side streets, as well as causing further congestion and access issues on the school premises. Objections believe that this will subsequently lead to unsafe highway conditions around children.

It was highlighted that the school has over 500 pupils and with parents alighting at peak times, removal of the free car park will cause serious disruption, particularly as the school only has a one-car access drive on a three-school site.

Highway Safety

Further issues around highway safety, particularly in Minster Road, were raised with one objection highlighting that in the last 3 years there have been 6 reports of vehicle damage, with 1 being written off and one requiring the front of the vehicle being replaced.

Cost of Living

Cost of living was raised as a core issue, with several objections referencing existing cost of living issues in the local area being negatively compounded by the addition of further charges for them to park their vehicles.

Equalities

Concerns about a disproportionately negative impact on motorists with certain protected characteristics were also raised, with concerns that proposed changes would have particularly negative impacts on accessibility for disabled and elderly motorists and residents.

Financial Viability

Objections once again raised the financial viability of the scheme and a perceived lack of transparency. Objections suggest that the Council won't be able to break even in the first one to three years and question whether there is any point making such changes now as Local Government Reorganisation may make long-term revenue generating schemes obsolete.

Legal Restriction on Implementing Parking Charges

There was also an objection raising a preexisting legal agreement between Queenborough Borough Council and Sheppey District Council. It's suggested that "in January 1978 when Swale District Council took the Borough status from Queenborough to become Swale Borough Council, it still had to abide by the same legally binding local authority amalgamation agreement of not being able to introduce parking restrictions or fees to those Sheppey car parks".

We also received comments as detailed below:

1. "when Queenborough Borough Council and Sheppey District Council were amalgamated and taken over by Swale District Council in April 1974, part of the many legally binding local authority amalgamation agreements and legislations were that Swale District Council cannot under any circumstances introduce car parking restrictions or fees at several currently free car parks on Sheppey.

In January 1978 when Swale District Council took the Borough status from Queenborough to become Swale Borough Council, it still had to abide by the same legally binding local authority amalgamation agreement of not being able to introduce parking restrictions or fees to those Sheppey car parks."

2. "What did it cost for the ship on shore car park to set up and what returns have you made could you please make this figure available please."
3. "We barely make enough money to live due to rising costs, we can't afford to pay to park our cars too because of people parking their cars outside of our property to avoid your fees."
4. "Charging this carpark will force more people to park outside of the school disrupting traffic and local residents and force more people on to [the Halfway Houses Primary School] site which is already bursting at the seams"
5. "At times, it has been so busy in our car park with... [non-customer] cars, that our own ... [customers] have been forced to park in the public car park or further afield. Last week, we had a very elderly lady with heart issues and COPD, arrive extremely breathless, having had to walk some long way because our own parking spaces were all taken"
6. "The four-way junction at the Halfway traffic lights right next to this car park is arguably the busiest on the Isle of Sheppey. It would be utter madness to force all of the above-mentioned vehicles into Minster Road and the surrounding side streets, which are already jam-packed with parked vehicles."
7. "The Halfway car park is adjacent to one of the entrances to the Halfway Houses Primary School. This car park is used by hundreds of parents every

day to take or collect their children from school. Minster Road between Banner Way and the car park (including Banner Way itself) is already clogged with parents' cars twice a day. What the proposal to introduce charges will do is to simply force even more parents' cars into Minster Road and surrounding streets."

1 objections and 1 Comment were received in relation to proposed changes in Grafton Road on the grounds of:

Local Economy

The objection highlighted concerns that the implementation of parking charges will severely impact local businesses, particularly in relation to businesses offering delivery services who rely on the free car park, especially in the evenings when there are restrictions on the High Street.

Resident Parking Availability

A comment was also received outlining concerns about the availability of parking for residents and whether any special concessions will be made to facilitate resident parking.

1 objection was received in relation to proposed changes in Front Brents on the grounds of:

Highway Safety

Vehicles regularly park at the head of the car park, making the corner difficult to navigate which provides a serious risk for emergency services trying to access the location. The objection proposes addressing this issue through appropriate waiting restrictions such as double yellow lines.

Highway Congestion

Concerns about residents being displaced were also raised, suggesting that displaced drivers may park on Front Brents and Upper Brents, subsequently preventing residents from parking outside their homes and reducing their quality of living.

Legal Requirements under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010

The objection also raised concerns that an increase in on-street parking caused by the introduction of charges will obstruct access for the Environment Agency and whether this increases the risks associated with deploying flood defences. They ask whether the Environment Agency have been consulted (a requirement under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010) or any mitigations have been proposed.

Local Economy

The car park was also highlighted as being a key community asset acting as a 'hub' for accessing local community services and businesses. It was suggested that introducing charges will deter use and undermine community activities having an overall negative impact on the local economy and leisure offerings.

Industrial Estate Access

Industrial Estate access was raised as an issue, with suggestions that overcrowded on-street parking already prevent articulated lorries from using the Brents industrial estate safely which has resulted in missed refuse collections. The objection highlights that displaced parking caused by introduction of the charges may further exacerbate these issues and cause an unsafe environment.

Nursery/Child Safety

The objection also highlights that the car park provides a safe environment for parents to load/unload their children for the local nursery, and that by introducing charges which will be payable by parents twice a day, they will be encouraged to load/unload their children on Upper Brents, creating a safety hazard.

Insufficient Parking Enforcement

Finally, the objection raises a lack of parking enforcement on Front Brents with frequent obstructions of double yellow lines and double parking suggested as being a common occurrence. The objection suggests that the introduction of charges will only lead to further vehicle parked in contravention of parking restrictions unless a suitable enforcement strategy is also proposed.

We also received the following questions as part of the objection:

1. Will local residents be eligible for a parking permit or exemption, as provided in other parts of Faversham for a small fee?
2. What is the proposed timescale for implementation?

Recommendation:

1. There is clear opposition to the change of use at the three free car parks proposed for charging as well as operational and legal issues that may require further investigation. This has been provided through consultation responses and the relevant petitions. Members of the Committee therefore need to consider if to proceed with the recommendation in the committee report.