

November 12th 2020

Pavement parking ban consultation response

The Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum is a non-statutory organisation with an equivalent role to a Town Council, formed when Royal Tunbridge Wells was left without separate local representation following the creation of the new Borough of Tunbridge Wells (TWBC). The 53 member organisations meet and contribute to consultations such as the TWBC Transport Plan, and its Cycling and Parking strategies, and KCC's Active Travel Strategy.

Royal Tunbridge Wells is the main centre of population (c50,000) in a largely rural Borough of 116,000 people. Parking is a huge and contentious issue across the town for residents, visitors and businesses alike. The town's busy commercial and residential centre, historic layout of narrow streets, high car park prices, growing car ownership and traffic congestion has put acute pressure on parking.

On the other hand, this also means that a high proportion of the population live within 1-2 miles of the town's facilities and could walk or cycle more if the environment was safer and more welcoming. But increasingly drivers search for 'free' on street parking on the pavement and go further from the centre into residential streets. This adds to congestion and has established the habit of parking on pavement edges and verges to keep traffic flowing without due consideration for pedestrians whose safe space this legally is.

The RTW Town Forum welcomes the Government's consideration of the problems this raises across the country. There has been a constant struggle in our town to limit inconsiderate on-street and on-pavement parking, and to keep pedestrians – particularly those with disabilities – from inconvenience and harm while walking in what should be their safe space.

Our Transport Working group has considered the Options provided and prefers Option 3 that bans pavement parking.

We welcome

- the proposed review of TROs to make them quicker and cheaper to enact. This also has a benefit wider than this issue.
- the proposed new offence of 'Unnecessary Obstruction of the Highway'. We hope that this offence could also encompass other 'obstructions' on pavements not just vehicles and could include wheelie bins, 'A' boards, tables and chairs, goods for sale etc. which impede the disabled, the elderly and parents with buggies particularly on narrow or busy pavements.

Formed in 2005, the Town Forum is the voice of the 50,000 residents of Royal Tunbridge Wells on issues of common interest

Town Forum Management Group

Adrian Berendt (Chair); Alastair Tod (Deputy Chair); Don Sloan (Deputy Chair); Carolyn Gray (Culture, Leisure & Tourism); David Wakefield (Finance); Jane Fenwick (Transport); Marianne MacDonald (Wellbeing); Mark Booker (Strategic Planning); Michael Holman (Water in the Wells)

- the added protection a ban would bring to our historic brick pavements. These are a unique feature in Royal Tunbridge Wells' town centre and much appreciated by residents and visitors alike. The oldest red brick pavements are in the historic centre's conservation area where the streets are narrow and where parking pressure is highest. They are easily damaged by vehicles and more expensive to repair than tarmac surfaces. As a result, surfaces can become uneven if not repaired quickly. The RTW Town Forum and the local Civic Society fight hard to retain this historic feature.
- a legal ban on pavement parking because local people and officers will have confidence in reporting offenders. Without clear rules and powers of enforcement, this menace of pavement parking, selfish use of pedestrian space without thought of the inconvenience and safety risk to others, will continue and get worse. Our experience of local enforcement is that if there is not a legal ban, drivers will think they can 'get away with it'.
- a ban on pavement parking is the clearest indication that things must change for the benefit of all pedestrians, and it will provide clarity for drivers.

We submit our views to you for your consideration.

Yours faithfully

Adrian Berendt, Chair, RTW Town Forum

Jane Fenwick, Chair, Transport Working Group, RTW Town Forum