



# MERE AND DISTRICT CHAMBER OF TRADE

January 2010

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Dear Council Members

Please find below the results of a survey carried out by the Chamber to ascertain the use of the two car parks in Mere Wiltshire by both Residents and Businesses.

These are as follows:

Total number of forms distributed (Total number of houses in Mere c.1100)	650
Total number of forms returned	162
Percentage returned	25%

Cars using car park for business or residential as percentage of replies	94%
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## **Comments against charges** (as shown on forms submitted)

- 1) Doctors' surgery appointments – free parking needed
- 2) More parking on roads causing obstruction
- 3) "Parking charges in Mere would deter people from shopping in Mere" thus being detrimental to traders (most people said they would shop in Shaftesbury or Gillingham instead)
- 4) Many houses in area are old with no parking.
- 5) "I may stop working"

## **Comments *for* charges**

None

## **Comments** (Other)

- People would either park in the roads or walk into Mere if possible.
- Holiday-makers passing through would by-pass Mere and go on to Wincanton.



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The Following are some of the objections which were received in **December 2006** when Salisbury District Council brought up the matter of Charges for Car Parks in Mere.

- Effect on parking in the Salisbury Street area: this would be detrimental to patients attending appointments at the Doctors Surgery.
- Effect on parking charges in both Salisbury Street and Castle Street areas: Detrimental for parents in taking and picking up children from school.
- Detrimental for the area as a whole as Long Term Parkers will park on the roads adjacent.
- Detrimental for the safety of other road users and pedestrians.

In respect of residents to both car parks, where they have no means of parking their own vehicles, use of the car parks is absolute. When visitors are visiting residents, where do they park?

Mere is not a very large town in fact the majority of the population (approx 28%) are over 65. There are not enough disability spaces in the town, so to charge in the Car Parks would cut them off from parking in a safe environment.

The amount of revenue you would produce from charging for both these car parks would be far less than the amount of money you will need to police the area, (illegally parked cars), possible accidents involving large vehicles trying to get past parked cars.

Small businesses who employ less than 2 people depend on the car parks for their customers and staff to park example: Hairdressers, who pay youngsters to train, these are on minimum wage for 16-18 year olds (£3.00 per hour), and their customers would have a problem as most are elderly and therefore this makes the costs too expensive.

If you were to allow the first hour free, what revenue would you then collect? This would only be from the Long Term Parkers, who are employees of businesses in the area. This area is a Minimum Wage Area and therefore if you were to levy, for example, £4.00 per day parking this would then take one hours pay for each day from the employee's salary. Is this fair?



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We have no major transport links in this area, it is a very rural area, originally farming was the main stay of Mere and surrounding districts. Now Mere has very little in the way of main business. Most employees travel quite a distance and they have no other way of commuting. The parking charges could then cause businesses to cease trading in Mere and consequently the area would become another statistic on the Unemployment Register.

If the Car parks were charged then this would kill this small community as no-one would bother to call in and take a walk around the town, perhaps stay and have a coffee at the Angel Tea Rooms, or perhaps lunch at the any of the Public Houses, or possibly to stay overnight, and therefore the economy would be damaged, which would be totally detrimental to the town. Although Mere is called a town due to the A303 being re-routed in the 70's the towns shops were then 110 and now approximately 10 are left in 2005.

Salisbury is looking for revenue for 2006/7 unfortunately you are choosing towns which are vulnerable and need more investment not funds taken from them. Mere is such a town. No investment has ever been forthcoming. The two largest employers in the area are on the Industrial Estates and most of their employees travel from Frome, Gillingham, Wincanton etc.

Even for these people to just call in to town quickly for a sandwich at lunch time, this would stop and they would probably travel to Gillingham, therefore giving more revenue to a town in Dorset and not helping Mere at all.

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We think that as a town that offers "local services" to passing travellers, that the business impact could be significant if parking charges are applied.

As an example, one facility has no parking of its own and relies on being able to advertise online that they have "free parking opposite", and use boards adjacent to the entrance to encourage people to stop. If they see charges in the car parks - will they stop?

In the tough trading conditions which we are now faced with every passer by that stops or stays is crucial.

Having already seen a drop off in passing trade, due to people staying on the A303, the effects of parking charges will be the final nail in the coffin, particularly when passers by can park free at Solstice Park, Little Chefs, and MacDonalds etc.

Passing trade will often stay longer than an hour, particularly at weekends. The effect on people who want to stay is also of major concern.



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We are aware that a Scrutiny Meeting is to be held to discuss these matters on 12 January 2010 and the Chamber will be represented.

The Chamber trusts that the Environmental Select Committee will look favourably at Mere and make a just decision not to charge for these two very valuable resources in an already badly affected rural area.

Yours faithfully

Barbara S Hewitt (Ms) MSSP  
Chair