



Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

# Parking Strategy for Tunbridge Wells 2025-30

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## Contents

Parking Strategy for Tunbridge Wells 2025-30 .....	1
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1 The Borough .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2 Compliance with legislation and other associated strategies.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3 Off-Street Parking .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4 On-Street Parking .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>5 On-Street Permit Parking .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>6 On-Street Parking - Other Considerations.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>7 Towns and Villages .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>8 Climate and Biodiversity Emergency .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>9 Electric Vehicles and Electric Vehicle Charging .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>10 Technology .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>11 Action Plan.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Appendix A .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Appendix B .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Appendix C .....</b>	<b>20</b>

# Introduction

The effective management of parking, both on and off-street, plays an integral part in the success of a Borough, by making it a safer and more attractive place to visit, live, work and do business.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's (TWBC's) Parking Strategy aims to support the Borough by meeting its current and future parking needs, balancing those of residents and businesses, whilst supporting the Council's desire to respond to the Climate Emergency.

The Parking Strategy will span 5 years, effective between the 1 April 2025 and the 31 March 2030, support other Council Strategies and dovetail with appropriate Kent County Council policies. It will also inform a Parking Action plan which will span 2 years. The strategy is Medium Term to recognise the fast changing environment, the emerging new Local Plan and Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan, and the period of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Terms of Reference for the Strategy have been agreed by Cabinet and can be found in Appendix A.

## 1 The Borough

- 1.1 The Borough of Tunbridge Wells covers 128 square miles and lies to the southwestern corner of Kent.
- 1.2 Approximately half of the total population of 115,000 residents, live in Tunbridge Wells, with the remainder being mainly rural. The Borough is a popular living, working, leisure and tourist destination. Its population is generally affluent, with car ownership exceeding UK averages. Over 82% of households in Tunbridge Wells use at least one vehicle, with nearly half having two or more.
- 1.3 The Borough has several tourist attractions, with those in Tunbridge Wells and Cranbrook generating significant numbers of visitors each year, many of whom arrive by car.
- 1.4 The A21 trunk road passes through the Borough, and the A26, one of the busiest A-class roads in the county, passes through Southborough and Tunbridge Wells, the latter carrying 20,000 vehicles per day on average.
- 1.5 There are four mainline railway stations in the Borough, with Tunbridge Wells and High Brooms linking London and Hastings, Paddock Wood linking London, Ashford, Dover and Maidstone and Ashurst linking London and Uckfield.
- 1.6 The COVID-19 Pandemic significantly impacted car parking and parking enforcement operations, but both have now fully recovered. There have been some lasting customer behaviour changes, where hybrid working has impacted demand for on-street parking, created midweek peaks in commuter car parking demand and companies investing in staff season tickets to encourage workers back to the office.

## 2 Compliance with legislation and other associated strategies

- 2.1 The Parking Strategy must support and align with other TWBC strategies and comply with legislation. It is important to ensure that aims and objectives are consistent.
- 2.2 Local Plans and Strategies with which the Parking Strategy is aligned are:
- New Local Plan - <https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan>
  - Transport Strategy - [https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/384775/New\\_Transport\\_Strategy\\_2015-16\\_TW633\\_low-res.pdf](https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/384775/New_Transport_Strategy_2015-16_TW633_low-res.pdf)
  - Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Local Plan - <https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/rtw-town-centre-plan>
  - Neighbourhood Development Plans – [Neighbourhood Plans \(tunbridgewells.gov.uk\)](https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/neighbourhood-plans)
  - Economic Development Strategy - <https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/business-portal/economic-development#section2>
  - Air Quality Action Plan - [https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/358604/Air-Quality-Action-Plan-accessible.pdf](https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/358604/Air-Quality-Action-Plan-accessible.pdf)
  - Climate and Biodiversity Emergency Response [https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/365982/Climate-Local-Tunbridge-Wells.pdf](https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/365982/Climate-Local-Tunbridge-Wells.pdf)
  - Infrastructure Delivery Plan [Infrastructure Delivery Plan \(tunbridgewells.gov.uk\)](https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/infrastructure-delivery-plan)
- 2.3 National Policies and Legislation
- The National Planning Policy Framework <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>
  - The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1984/27/contents>
  - The Traffic Management Act 2004 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/18/contents>
  - Traffic Signs, Regulations and General Directions 2016. Guidance is provided in the form of the Traffic Signs Manual <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2016/362/contents/made>  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-signs-manual>

## 3 Off-Street Parking

- 3.1 The Council is the primary provider of off-street parking facilities across the Borough, which it operates in support of local residents, economies and communities. The Council is committed to providing sufficient parking capacity in its towns and villages to help maintain their economic viability and vibrancy.



- 3.2 Whilst the Council has leased car parks to Cranbrook Town Council, it is intended that all other car parks remain managed directly by TWBC.
- 3.3 The new Local Plan and the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan are currently being developed with the new Local Plan currently at Examination and anticipated to be adopted in Spring 2025. The emerging Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan is at a much earlier stage in production. The Royal Victoria Place shopping centre lease has recently been acquired by the Council and it will undergo significant development in the short and medium term. The Council is committed to ensuring sufficient parking provision, of appropriate quality, to support the aspirations of the town centre residential and business developments evolving from the Local and Town Centre plans.
- 3.4 The Council's minimum quality standards for its car park facilities are that they are safe, well maintained, accessible for disabled users, well lit, clean, well signed, good 4/5G mobile signal and with sufficient payment facilities. Certain car parks will be offered with additional features dependent upon the needs and desires of the customers. All multi-storey car parks will have received an assessment of their suicide prevention measures and Samaritans support signage will be installed, at sites where they deem it appropriate.
- 3.5 The Council will consider the implications of new technology, including Electric Vehicle charging, to future proof its car parks whenever it invests in its parking infrastructure.
- 3.6 Whilst Cabinet has approved the disposal of Mount Pleasant Avenue car park for alternative use, it is not intended to dispose of any further car parking capacity during the period covered by this strategy. The Action Plan will contain a review of parking sites to determine capacity requirements post 1 April 2030, which will inform the Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan, and may contain a review of certain parking sites to consider their redevelopment during the period of the plan, whilst retaining existing capacity.
- 3.7 Private Non-Residential (PNR) car parks are found in many locations around the Borough. These vary from a few spaces on forecourts to larger purpose-built structures. The Borough Council exercises no direct control over these facilities (unless they are the owner). Current planning policies, both at national and local level, encourage active travel measures and the use alternative travel such as walking, cycling and public transport. An increasing number of PNR car parks are being redeveloped for other uses, often residential accommodation with little on-site parking provision. Whilst this aligns with current planning policies, it can lead to on-street parking problems, particularly where permit parking schemes operate.
- 3.8 Appendix B contains a list of Council operated public car parks.
- 3.9 To enable any enforcement of payment or parking Terms and Conditions (T's & C's) in off-street car parks, a Parking Places Order (PPO) must be made laying out the charges and T's & C's. These are subject to a formal public consultation process before they can be made. This process is undertaken by TWBC.

## 3.10 **Parking Ticket Options**

### **Season Tickets and Reserved Parking Spaces**

TWBC aims to provide product flexibility to customers, to enable them to purchase a product to best serve their needs. This needs to be balanced against the cost of providing options, so will be limited to the largest groups of demand.

The Covid-19 pandemic has created lasting behaviour change for off-street parking demand. Employers are now wishing to purchase reserved parking and season tickets to provide to their

staff as a benefit to incentivise them to return to the office. Other customers, enjoying hybrid working, are demanding midweek parking, whereas their Monday and Friday parking demand remains relatively low. The centre of Tunbridge Wells has extensive resident permit parking on-street to support residents to be able to park near their homes. In certain areas of the town, there is particular pressure on residents parking and residents season tickets for off-street parking can help to alleviate this.

TWBC will therefore provide full and part-time parking season tickets to support customers flexible working arrangements. Residents season tickets will be made available where there is exceptional demand for on-street residential parking spaces, either in resident only car parks or shared use car parks.

Individual business season ticket needs will be accommodated where possible, with appropriate cost recovery for additional administration requirements.

### **Hourly, Daily and Night-time parking tickets**

TWBC will provide the option to purchase parking tickets in advance for a set time period or to use a Check-in Check-out service in car parks where it is considered an appropriate service. Tickets can also be purchased for more than one day via the cashless parking app.

### **Parking Charges**

Car parking charges are an important tool to help regulate and manage car parking spaces and encourage a particular type of use.

Short-stay parking close to town centre amenities, for shoppers and other visitors will generally have a higher first hour charge, but then lower charge for each incremental hour of parking. This incentivises dwell time to benefit businesses and the economy.

Long-stay parking, close to town centre amenities, for workers and commuters provide a discounted day rate, but often on upper floors of car parks, leaving lower floors for shoppers and turnover of spaces.

Short-stay parking, away from town centres, has historically had initial free periods of parking, but then a charge levied for longer stays. This has reduced dwell time for shopping and has resulted in the costs of the car park provision exceeding the income. The Council has a principle of “user pays”, based upon the outcomes of the annual Budget Surveys, which applies to all services, so when appropriate, these car park charges will be regularised.

Long-stay parking, away from town centres, offers season tickets at discounted rates.

Car parks will be grouped into categories dependent upon their location and customer demand. Prices will then be set equitably for all car parks in the group, to ensure fairness to customers and the local economies they serve.

Disabled Parking Bays will continue to be provided free of charge to all Blue Badge Holders.

Charges for all motorised vehicles will be considered and levied if appropriate.

All parking charges are generally reviewed annually, as approved by Cabinet, to ensure they remain relevant and encourage and support local economic activity and vibrancy.

Businesses will not be offered discounts for bulk purchases of permits. The prices charged will be as set for all customers. The Council is not able to offer free parking for Charities or Community Interest Companies, due to the significant demand.

Ensuring the customer has paid for a parking session is enforced by TWBC’s Civil Enforcement Officers. They are permitted to issue Penalty Charge Notices (PCN’s) if payment has not been

made. Similarly, they may issue a PCN if the customer has not complied with the Terms and Conditions of the use of the car park, for example parking in a marked bay.

### **Payment Methods**

The Council intends for customers to access their services using “Digital First” wherever possible. The Council will only accept electronic payments for parking services, but offers cashless parking by mobile phone App and telephone (the current service provider is RingGo), credit or debit card payment, and monthly direct debit payment for season tickets.

Cashless parking is the most cost effective method of payment for the Council and will be promoted as the preferred option. If a car park reaches a critical mass of customers using cashless parking, a decision may be made to convert to cashless parking only.

Season tickets can only be purchased online by card or by direct debit.

Businesses requiring a number of season tickets can be invoiced upon agreement.

## **4 On-Street Parking**

- 4.1 Kent County Council (KCC) are the Highway Authority responsible for managing parking on the highway. In common with the other Boroughs and Districts in Kent, KCC has delegated this function to TWBC through an Agency Agreement. The Agency Agreement with KCC has a termination clause requiring two years’ notice by either party.
- 4.2 Parking restrictions on public highways fall into two broad categories:
  - to ensure safe and free traffic movement
  - to manage who can park where and for how long
- 4.3 KCC retains responsibility for considering and implementing restrictions needed for safe and free movement, generally yellow line “no waiting” restrictions. TWBC is responsible for maintaining those restrictions, repainting worn lines and replacing restriction signs. It is also responsible for enforcing those restrictions, ensuring Civil Enforcement Officers issue Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) for non-compliance.
- 4.4 TWBC has no powers to remove or relocate vehicles on the highway in any circumstances. Responsibility in this regard rests with KCC under their highway management powers or with the Police.
- 4.5 TWBC is responsible for considering, implementing and enforcing restrictions managing who can park where and for how long, generally limited wait and resident permit parking bays, via the Agency Agreement.
- 4.6 Restrictions on waiting and parking on-street require the making of a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), which can only be made by KCC. TWBC will often support KCC by drafting the TRO’s for the Borough.

- 4.7 All TRO's and PPO's must align with KCC's Highways Management policies and objectives and TWBC will work with KCC identify and tackle inappropriate and dangerous parking or where parking is causing congestion.

## 5 On-Street Permit Parking

- 5.1 Resident permit parking is part of TWBC managing who can park where and for how long. It is necessary to balance conflicting demands for kerbside space in busy towns and village centres.
- 5.2 Resident permit parking was first introduced in Tunbridge Wells in the late 1970s starting in one street and expanding over time to cover the whole central part of town. (see Appendix C for maps of the permit zones)
- 5.3 Such schemes have a number of advantages for residents but, as with many forms of restriction, there are disadvantages too. The main issues are tabulated below:

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Residents in streets where off-street parking is limited or non-existent have a reasonable opportunity to park near their home.</li><li>In shared use bays, visitors and other short-term users still have the opportunity to park.</li><li>Can reduce traffic flow on residential streets.</li><li>Can improve local air quality.</li><li>Can encourage use of alternative modes of travel through reduction in availability of 'free' roadside space.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Can move parking from one residential street/area to another.</li><li>Can impact negatively on retail sector.</li><li>Can result in net loss of roadside space through need to formalise parking bays.</li><li>Can be viewed negatively by some residents who dislike control of where vehicles can park and limit on number of permits available.</li><li>Often misconstrued as a right to park, permit parking is only ever provided as a potential benefit</li></ul>

- 5.4 Whilst the relevant legislation does not specifically endorse the introduction of permit parking to make it easier for residents to park near their homes, it is generally accepted that the clauses which allow the introduction of restrictions to benefit air quality and/or preserve the amenities of an area, plus those relating to traffic movement, are appropriate for this purpose.
- 5.5 The TWBC on-street permit schemes recognise that kerbside space belongs to the public and that they should balance the needs of residents, businesses and visitors, whilst helping the residents with accessible places to park. Only in exceptional circumstances, such as a narrow cul-de-sac with no turning facilities, would residents only kerbside parking be considered. KCC does not currently have a policy in place regarding shared-use parking bays over resident-only parking bays. It remains the policy of the Borough to determine via the Agency Agreement.



- 5.6 The Council will investigate a new resident parking scheme or an amendment to an existing scheme when a parking issue is identified that would benefit from measures to protect resident parking and a substantial number of residents demonstrate a desire for change.

### **Residents Permit Options**

Residents permits and visitors vouchers are only available to those who reside at the address. Businesses, developers, owners and landlords are not entitled to residents permits unless they live at the property. Residents will be required to provide evidence of their residency during the application process. Updated documentation is requested periodically to ensure the permit holder is still in residence.

The number of permits available per property is dependent upon the level of demand for kerbside space. Some properties are entitled to 1 permit, some to 2. In one zone there is a restriction of 1 permit, but there is a waiting list for this as the number of spaces is so restricted. Demand is constantly monitored and the number of permits offered can be amended if necessary to give all residents fair access to space.

Where new developments are built or properties are converted for residential occupation, an assessment will be made during the planning approval process considering whether there is sufficient capacity to offer residents permits to the new occupants. If there is capacity, then permits will be offered, but if there is already excess demand, restrictions excluding the properties from the TRO for the parking zone will be notified as an “Informative” in the planning permission decision.

If there is sufficient kerbside capacity in a zone to offer parking for visitors, then residents will be able to purchase books of 10 full day or 20 half day visitor vouchers. These can be purchased and administered through the residents online account and are significantly discounted from the prices that would need to be paid in the car parks. Vouchers are limited to 50 full day equivalents, per property, per year.

If there is insufficient kerbside capacity, the properties in the zone will not be entitled to visitors vouchers and will be unable to buy them through their account.

### **Residents Permit Charges**

Residents’ permits are currently set as a flat fee per permit. There is a small price differential between permits issued for central Tunbridge Wells zones and those in towns and villages which will continue due to the relative demand for kerbside parking space.

The Council will consider further differential pricing to signal their support for environmentally friendly vehicles within the period covered by the strategy.

Visitor vouchers are charged per voucher irrespective of the zone.

Residents permit and visitor voucher charges are generally reviewed annually, as approved by Cabinet, to ensure they remain relevant and encourage and support local economic activity and vibrancy.

The charges are set to recover the cost of providing the service rather than to provide a surplus to support other Council services.

Due to the small value of the transactions there are no refunds provided for part year usage.

Visitors permits expire after 1 year.

### **Payment Methods**

The Council uses an online virtual residents permit system, which has reduced costs and supports the Council’s environmental aims. Residents permits and visitors vouchers can be purchased online using debit or credit cards.

Support to use the online system is provided by Customer Services Officers in the Amelia and for those who need to purchase visitors vouchers, but who do not have IT access to enter vehicle details, there are limited paper vouchers that can also be obtained from the Amelia.

## 6 On-Street Parking - Other Considerations

- 6.1 Vehicle Access Markings (white line access markings) are used to protect private driveways that join the carriageway in locations where parking occurs. To make drivers aware of the presence of a driveway, a resident can request that TWBC introduces a white line Vehicle Access Marking across their driveway. These markings cannot be enforced and are only advisory but generally act as a good deterrent to obstruction. A charge is made to the resident for their introduction and any re-marking required.
- 6.2 Blue Badge Bays are provided as and when requested subject to a set criteria being met. To be enforceable, bays need to be subject to a Traffic Regulation Order. It is intended that this service remain free of charge to the user for the term of the strategy, although it is permissible to charge for the service and some Councils do.
- 6.3 Car Club Bays have been provided in a number of locations around the town based on need identified by the Car Club operator – currently Co-wheels. It has been shown that a car club can reduce the number of privately owned vehicles, thereby decreasing the demand for parking space in highly populated town centre areas. These bays are currently in 8 locations: Amherst Road, Goods Station Road, Grove Hill Road, Mount Ephraim Road, Mount Pleasant Road - Civic Way by Assembly Hall Theatre, Mount Pleasant Road - opposite the Railway station, Quarry Road and Warwick Park. The size of the fleet will be determined by the level of demand.
- 6.4 Members will continue to engage with stakeholders around the issue of buses parking in the bus stand on the A26 adjacent to the Common, to help them to find a solution.
- 6.5 Bus Stops are strategically located across the Borough. Generally, busier stops in commercial centres are designated as Bus Stop Clearways which are enforceable by Civil Enforcement Officers on foot and by the Council's CCTV safety car.
- 6.6 Cycle Lanes are provided at the side of some carriageways and can take two forms: advisory or mandatory. Vehicles are permitted in advisory cycle lanes but not in mandatory lanes. Parking in cycle lanes has been identified as an issue in some locations, but enforcement is only possible with the installation of double yellow lines, the provision of which is a KCC function.
- 6.7 Public dropped kerbs, which are generally installed to allow pedestrians to cross the road and private dropped kerbs, which are installed to allow vehicles to access the carriageway from private land, are enforced by TWBC. Many people will park across their own driveways if they have a private dropped kerb, so they are only enforced when a complaint is received.
- 6.8 Footway and Verge Parking - the issues that arise are generally obstructing pedestrians, particularly those with pushchairs or mobility scooters, and damage to either the footway or the verge. Such parking is, outside of London and a very few other places, not illegal. Action can only be taken by the Police if an obstruction is caused or when a driver is deemed to have driven on the footway. If a specific prohibition on footway or verge parking has been imposed through a TRO, the highway authority or their agent can issue a PCN for contraventions. Through a KCC Order, TWBC has banned footway/verge parking in parts of 6 Tunbridge Wells streets. Although this restriction has been partially successful, it has complications and would not necessarily translate well to other streets. The need for excessive signing is one of the reasons few authorities impose this type of restriction and also why there are no proposals to add further

streets to the list of those controlled in this way at the present time. Central Government has frequently debated imposing a nationwide ban on footway and verge parking to replicate the one in London since 1974. The controversial nature of such a ban appears to have dissuaded successive governments from implementing any legislation, although a parliamentary inquiry in 2019 took evidence from interested parties.

- 6.9 Loading Bays have been provided in Tunbridge Wells town centre and Cranbrook. This type of bay is provided in areas with a high demand for commercial vehicle parking to service nearby retail or other commercial premises.
- 6.10 Planning and Parking - the Local Planning Authority consults KCC regarding certain, larger-scale planning applications. They will principally look at the potential impact on the highway network. Parking Services are often consulted by planning officers regarding development proposals and, whilst not a statutory consultee, can and do provide comments, especially where a smaller proposal falls outside the local highway authority consultation criteria. Planning Officers also encourage developers to have their own pre-application engagement with KCC Highways.
- 6.11 Through involvement with the planning process, Parking Services can assess the impacts of development and, where appropriate, make recommendations to the Planning Service. Those recommendations could, for instance, involve a need to fund amendments to parking restrictions or undertake survey work to demonstrate that no detriment will result. This will attract S106 developer funding to undertake the works.
- 6.12 Police Bays have been provided on request and are reviewed with the Police from time to time. These bays allow police vehicles to stop in strategic positions around a town centre.
- 6.13 School Keep Clear Markings are introduced to prevent potentially unsafe parking near school entrances, School Keep Clear markings are often provided by KCC. These can be enforced but only where a TRO has been made. It is an offence to stop for any purpose on these markings. This marking is one of the few which can be enforced using CCTV and TWBC uses its mobile safety car to do so throughout the Borough. Currently, 19 schools have such markings supported by an Order.
- 6.14 Taxi Bays are provided as required and where deemed to be appropriate. These are currently focussed around the Central Station in Tunbridge Wells, with other smaller bays located around the town centre. No formal bays are provided in other parts of the Borough on the highway.
- 6.15 Non-residents may purchase a daily parking dispensation from the Council, via the cashless parking app. A dispensation allows a vehicle to park on a double or single yellow line or in a shared residents permit holder bay, usually because trades people need to park their vehicles close to a property where they are carrying out works. A dispensation is not valid in special purpose bays i.e. blue badge bays or loading bays, or anywhere which may cause a safety issue.
- 6.16 Bay suspensions may be requested where companies need to carry out works on-street i.e. utility companies for excavation or ground works. Residents may also request them for skips. If a highway needs to be closed, a KCC highways permit will be required before a bay suspension can be obtained. The bay suspension may be purchased from the Council website.

## 7 Towns and Villages

- 7.1 Almost 50% of the Borough residents live in Tunbridge Wells and consequently many of the higher-profile parking issues are concentrated there. The towns and villages however, whilst less densely populated, still have important parking needs in certain areas, to support the residents and their local economies to flourish.

- 7.2 TWBC will not be providing any further parking facilities in the towns or villages but will fully maintain and enforce its existing stock.
- 7.3 The Council will review on and off-street parking and traffic management provision to support local communities and economies, as and when new developments or safety issues demand.
- 7.4 The Parking Enforcement Team will engage with towns and villages to ensure that on and off-street parking provision is appropriately managed and enforced.
- 7.5 The facilities and known issues in the towns and villages are thus:

1.1.1. Southborough, although physically adjacent to Tunbridge Wells, is still a separate administrative area with its own Town Council. There are two public car parks within its boundaries, one at Yew Tree Road, which is operated by TWBC and chargeable to the user, and the other at Pennington Recreation Ground which is operated by the Town Council and offers free parking. Yew Tree car park is considered to be an out-of-town car park, providing support to local businesses and facilities. It is similar in purpose to those at Paddock Wood and St John Street and it is anticipated that the charges for the three car parks will be standardised over time to reflect this, although for the term of the Strategy, the free parking periods offered in Yew Tree and Paddock Wood car parks will be protected.

Many of the residential properties in the town centre have limited off-street parking, and there are known to be roadside parking capacity issues. There are currently no permit parking restrictions in the town.

- 1.1.2. Bidborough, Speldhurst and Langton Green lie to the west of Tunbridge Wells and currently do not have any Borough Council owned or operated public car parks. There are known to be some localised parking issues, generally lacking off-street parking for dwellings and insufficient roadside space available. The presence of primary schools in each village does cause relatively short-term parking problems.
- 1.1.3. Rusthall also lies to the west of Tunbridge Wells and does not have any public car parks. There are some marked spaces adjacent to the Common, but they are not maintained by TWBC. There are issues with shoppers parking inappropriately in the High Street and regular enforcement is undertaken, but with limited success. Rusthall Parish Council has preferred not to have any parking restrictions imposed to resolve this and positively, parking along the High Street does reduce vehicle speeds through the village.
- 1.1.4. Pembury lies to the immediate northeast of Tunbridge Wells. There are no public car parks in the village and there are localised parking issues along the High Street.
- 1.1.5. Matfield and Brenchley are broadly in the centre of the Borough. Brenchley has a small Council owned and operated car park in its centre which is free of charge, with a larger KCC owned car park opposite the primary school. Neither village is the subject of any significant level of parking related issues.
- 1.1.6. Paddock Wood is on the Borough's northern edge and is the only other settlement with a mainline railway station (Tunbridge Wells and High Brooms stations are within the town). Consequently, there are some associated parking issues which have been partly addressed through the introduction of permit parking in some residential streets. There are two TWBC public car parks on Commercial Road and a South Eastern Railway station of 346 spaces. It is similar in purpose to those at Yew Tree Road in Southborough and St John Street and it is anticipated that the charges for the three car parks will be standardised over time to reflect this. Whilst there is adequate parking provision, shoppers are prone to parking in Commercial Road to pop into the shops, rather than parking appropriately in the car parks. Regular enforcement is undertaken

to prevent this where possible. There is significant residential development being undertaken in the outskirts of the town, which may impact parking in the centre. It is not possible to determine the impact at present but the situation will be monitored and appropriate action taken where necessary.

- 1.1.7. Five Oak Green is a modest size with no public car parks provided. Some parking issues are known to exist on housing estates in the village. Significant residential development is proposed for the parish (Capel), although should that happen, it is unlikely to impact the village itself.
- 1.1.8. Horsmonden is centred on a crossroads carrying north-south and east-west traffic through the district. There are not known to be any significant parking-related issues. However, KCC introduced double yellow lines at the crossroads to address a poor crash record. Otherwise, parking in the village is free of restriction with few reported problems.
- 1.1.9. Goudhurst straddles the A262 with a sharp S bend near the church, causing regular issues for larger vehicles. Parking on the A262 in the village centre is somewhat controversial since it takes place on parts of the highway which were constructed to be for shared use. The village car park, once owned and operated by the Council, is now the responsibility of the Parish Council.
- 1.1.10. Curtisden Green lies to the north of Goudhurst, and the only known parking issues are occasional and appear to be related solely to the sizeable private Bethany School.
- 1.1.11. Colliers Green has, from time to time, experienced parking issues related to Colliers Green C of E Primary School.
- 1.1.12. Kilndown lies to the west of Goudhurst and has a village hall, but few parking issues are reported.
- 1.1.13. Cranbrook lies towards the east of the district and is a popular tourist destination. The town has four public car parks in the town centre, all operated by the Parish Council, although two are leased from the Council until 2028. These are free of charge to use. Whilst there are extensive waiting restrictions throughout the centre, there are no permit parking schemes in operation, with little or no demand having been expressed for them.
- 1.1.14. Sissinghurst sits off the A262, meaning that traffic levels can be quite high. The main thoroughfare (The Street) is quite wide, but parking takes place on both sides which can impact on free-flow through the village. There are no public car parks with the village.
- 1.1.15. Frittenden is at the farthest north-eastern boundary of the Borough and, apart from traffic and parking associated with the primary school, it has no known parking issues. There are no public car parks in the village.
- 1.1.16. Hawkhurst is centred on the A268 /A229 intersection. Consequently, traffic congestion in the village can often be a significant problem. TWBC operates one public car park in the village at Northgrove Road which has free short term parking, and there is a KCC managed car park adjacent to the primary school. Two supermarkets in the village centre also have parking for customers. On-street parking issues generally relate to restrictions imposed on the A roads to prevent or reduce congestion, plus some localised issues in side streets where off-street parking is limited.
- 1.1.17. Lamberhurst is situated around the route of the previous A21 (now B2162). There is one public car park by the village hall which is operated by the Parish Council. Traffic calming measures were introduced into the village when the main road was de-trunked.

Parking near the village store at the B2162/B2100 junction causes some issues with traffic movement but there are no on-street restrictions in place.

- 1.1.18. Benenden has no known parking issues. There are no waiting restrictions or public car parks in the village.
- 1.1.19. Iden Green lies to the south of Benenden and is a scattered residential development with occasional reports of parking-related issues.
- 1.1.20. Sandhurst lies towards the eastern edge of the district, straddles the A268 and, consequently, experiences higher levels of traffic than many villages in the area. There are no TWBC car parks in the village and very few parking issues are reported.

## 8 Climate and Biodiversity Emergency

- 8.1 In July 2019, the Borough Council declared a Climate and Biodiversity emergency. The Council resolved to ensure that forthcoming plans and strategies (including the Local Plan and the next iteration of the Five-Year Plan) set out ways in which the Council can make its contribution to reducing carbon emissions, the degradation of the environment and combating climate change. It agreed an ambition to make the Council's operations carbon neutral by 2030.
- 8.2 The contributions of the Parking Services are:
  - Introduction and enforcement of the Public Realm 2 traffic management restriction through the centre of Tunbridge Wells, in conjunction with KCC as the Highways Authority. The scheme was introduced in late 2019 to reduce the number of vehicles travelling through the town centre, making it a safer and more pedestrian and environmentally friendly area. The fall in the number of vehicles travelling through the restriction shows that it is having the desired effect. This builds upon the Public Realm 1 restriction introduced in 2014, which was introduced with the same ambition. There are no plans to expand this during the period covered by this strategy.
  - Migrate the Parking Services vehicle fleet to Electric or hybrid vehicles during the time period covered by this strategy. Parking Services currently have 5 vehicles of which 2 are electric and 2 are hybrid.
  - Encouraging Alternative Transport Solutions by providing off-street undercover cycle storage units in the multi-storey car parks. Also working with the Tunbridge Wells car club contractor to find the best locations for additional cars and help them switch their petrol cars to EV, by supporting the provision of EV chargers.
  - Ensuring that car park refurbishments are upgraded to benefit from energy efficiencies. This includes the installation of LED lighting with movement sensors and solar panels on outside payment machines.
  - Conducting Parking Services business electronically, including electronic payments for parking only, virtual permits and use of .GOV printing services for notices. This saves paper, envelopes, postage, cash collection miles and operational maintenance and printing resources.
  - Exploring alternative charging structures for residents parking permits to signal the Council's encouragement for the use of EV vehicles and smaller energy efficient vehicles. The intention is not to financially penalise residents who cannot afford an electric vehicle. It is more for the Council to express the direction of travel it wishes to encourage.



## 9 Electric Vehicles and Electric Vehicle Charging

- 9.1 The Council is committed to providing EV charging in both its multi-storey and surface car parks.
- 9.2 EV charging bays are currently only provided in one on-street location in the district and is a dual electric taxi/private hire charging facility alongside a publicly available charger on Mount Pleasant Road in Tunbridge Wells. All other EV charging facilities provided by the Borough Council are in car parks, including Crescent Road, Yew Tree Road and Commercial Road East Paddock Wood.
- 9.3 Whilst the Council has previously provided EV charging free of charge, and is still doing so in Crescent Road, in the future this will be a chargeable service. However, the Council has agreed that the provision of the service will be cost neutral to the customer and the Council will not seek a profit margin from their use for the term of the strategy. The Council intends to make the switch to electric vehicles as affordable as possible.
- 9.4 The Council has applied for and received £102,000 of On-Street Residential Chargepoint (ORC's) Government grant funding. These chargers will initially be installed in multi-storey car parks that are open 24 hours. Whilst the name of the grant implies that only residents can benefit from the use of the chargers, the conditions of the grant require only that residents have 24 hour access to them.
- 9.5 Further funding for EV charger provision is awaited via the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) grant. It will be issued to KCC as the Highways authority, who are indicating that their plan for the roll out of EV chargers in the county will be available from 1 April 2025. The Council will work with KCC to identify suitable locations for the chargers and support their installation.
- 9.6 EV technology is evolving at pace, with vehicles being able to travel further without lengthy charge times, as battery and charging technology improves. Trying to anticipate the speed of the roll out of EV vehicles, the Council is considering the implications and future proofing whenever it invests in its parking infrastructure. This has many implications including ensuring there is sufficient electricity supply into the car parks via UK Power Networks, ducting for EV charger installation expansion being built in, weightbearing loads required for multi-storey car parks are considered, as electric vehicles are much heavier than petrol vehicles, and sprinkler systems are installed above EV charger points (whilst not a legal or insurance requirement currently, it may become mandatory in the future).

## 10 Technology

- 10.1 Parking services intends to exploit technology using innovation to improve the customer experience and reduce overheads. This is subject to a sound business case and available financing.
- 10.2 Increasingly sophisticated ways of conveying information to drivers about the availability of parking spaces both on and off-street are being developed. There is expected to be significant levels of progress in this field which may become cost beneficial.
- 10.3 Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) has proved a useful tool in improving the customer service experience. Unfortunately, Local Authorities are prevented in legislation from

applying to the Driver and Vehicles Licensing Agency for vehicle registration details should a customer leave without paying. This means an entry and exit barrier system is required to ensure customers have paid, which can cause congestion both in the car park upon exit and on the roads when entering. It is possible however, via the cashless parking system (RingGo) to create an account which automatically takes payment from the account using ANPR. Enforcement will still take place, but the Council's Civil Enforcement Officers will check to see that a provision for payment has been set aside in RingGo for the vehicle in question. This is being considered for trial at Royal Victoria Place shopping centre.

- 10.4 CCTV has been installed in some of the Council's car parks, but not all. Further work is required to determine their effectiveness as a safety measure and damage prevention measure, but if they are proven to be successful, then further roll out of CCTV will be considered.
- 10.5 Screen technology can be used in car parks to help customers wayfind and to advertise for retailers, businesses, events, visitor attractions and facilities. This can also be a helpful source of revenue for the Council.
- 10.6 Service enhancements can be provided which can also generate revenue. An example is dry car washing, where there is a lack of water supply, but technology has enabled a solution. Value added services will be explored if an opportunity arises.
- 10.7 Whilst the council must embrace technology if it is to deliver excellent, modern, cost efficient services, it must consider the impact of these technological advances on customers who may not be able to adapt to them as easily. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out for any significant change to practices, to ensure that there is a safety net to provide support to prevent social exclusion.

## 11 Action Plan

- 11.1 The Parking Strategy is intended to be a high-level strategy for the next 5 years, much shorter than the previous 10 year plan, which proved to be unworkable because of the pace of change. Whilst the pandemic had a significant impact upon the parking industry, significant changes in technology and customer behaviours are likely to be just as important. The Council will need to be flexible to provide the service levels that customers will expect and to continue to support the wellbeing of the Borough.
- 11.2 An Action Plan, aligned with the Parking Strategy, will follow, setting out the specific projects that will be undertaken by Parking Services between 2025 and 2027, which will focus and agree objectives and give clarity to the Council and the public over the priorities of the Council. Only if there is significant change, for example in legislation or in the political direction of the Council, will this be reviewed until 2027 when a new Action Plan will be agreed.

# Appendix A

## Terms of Reference

### Car Parking Strategy – 2025 to 2030

- To ensure that we can provide sufficient, high quality and appropriately located parking, to support the needs of residents and local businesses throughout the Borough.

- To ensure that there is appropriate enforcement of parking regulations to protect the safety of the public and facilitate the Borough to keep moving.
- To align future car parking provision with the new Local Plan, Town Centre Action Plan, Transport and Economic Development Strategies.
- To align car parking aims with the corporate ambitions of the Council, specifically: Climate action, Sustainable growth, Our environment, Community wellbeing and creating a Vibrant economy.
- To consider the opportunities presented by new technologies and how they can be incorporated to provide a service that offers best value.

### **Short to Medium Term Plan that will sit beneath it – 2025 - 2027**

- To review off street parking customer behaviour post Covid, analyse data trends and forecast usage to determine off street parking demand for the period of the strategy. This will inform the level of provision required.
- To review off street charging structures to ensure they fulfil the “user pays” principle, are fair across the Borough and support their local communities.
- To work with Rivington Hark and Knight Frank to refurbish Royal Victoria Place car park, to support and compliment the developments that will be taking place in the shopping centre.
- To refurbish Great Hall car park, installing energy efficiencies and delivering improvements to the customer experience.
- To deliver Electric Vehicle Charging provision in Council car parks wherever possible.
- To review on street permit schemes where there is sufficient resident support to do so.

# Appendix B

## Council, Town and Parish Operated Car Parks

Name of Car Park	Location	Spaces	Owned By	Charges	Season Tickets - Full/Part Time
<b><u>Town Centre Car Parks</u></b>					
Crescent Road	Tunbridge Wells	1061	TWBC	Yes	Both
Great Hall	Tunbridge Wells	199	TWBC	Yes	Full
Linden Park Road	Tunbridge Wells	52	Leased by TWBC	Yes	Both
Meadow Road	Tunbridge Wells	440	TWBC	Yes	Both
Pantiles	Tunbridge Wells	111	Leased by TWBC	Yes	Both
Royal Victoria Place	Tunbridge Wells	1220	TWBC	Yes	No
Torrington	Tunbridge Wells	235	Leased by TWBC	Yes limited by contract	Both
<b><u>Town Centre Car Parks supporting Local Commercial Area and Facilities</u></b>					
Beech Street	Tunbridge Wells	38	TWBC	Yes	Both
Camden Road	Tunbridge Wells	62	TWBC	Yes	Both
Little Mount Sion	Tunbridge Wells	18	TWBC	Yes	No
<b><u>Out Of Town Car Parks supporting Local Commercial Area and Facilities</u></b>					
Commercial Road (East)	Paddock Wood	45	TWBC	Yes	No
Commercial Road (West)	Paddock Wood	77	TWBC	Yes	Both
John Street	Tunbridge Wells	64	TWBC	Yes	Full
Yew Tree Road	Southborough	78	TWBC	Yes	Full
<b><u>Central Tunbridge Wells Residents Only Car Parks</u></b>					
High Brooms Road	Southborough	10	TWBC	Yes	Resident Only

Stone Street (North and South)	Tunbridge Wells	26	TWBC	Yes	Resident Only
Warwick Road	Tunbridge Wells	18	TWBC	Yes	Resident Only
<b><u>Park Car Park and Out of Town Car Park Supporting Workers</u></b>					
Dunorlan (Pembury Road)	Tunbridge Wells	40	TWBC	Yes	No
Dunorlan (Halls Hole Road)	Tunbridge Wells	40	TWBC	Yes	No
Old Coach Park	Tunbridge Wells	37	TWBC	Yes	No
<b><u>Permit Only car parks supporting Workers</u></b>					
Mount Pleasant Avenue (on-street)	Tunbridge Wells	20	TWBC	Yes	Full
Town Hall Yard-Part-time only	Tunbridge Wells	100	TWBC	Yes	No
Town Hall Yard		22		Yes	Full
<b><u>Out of Town Car Park supporting Residents</u></b>					
North Grove Road	Hawkhurst	34	TWBC	Partial	Full
<b><u>Out Of Town Car Parks supporting Local Commercial Area and Facilities</u></b>					
Carriers Road	Cranbrook	14	TWBC	No	No
High Street	Brenchley	9	TWBC	No	No
High Street (Regal)	Cranbrook	297	Leased by TWBC to Cranbrook PC	No	No
Tanyard	Cranbrook	85	Leased by TWBC to Cranbrook PC	No	No
Fairground Site, Major York's Road	Tunbridge Wells	170	Targetfollow	Yes	No
Pennington Grounds	Southborough	41	Southborough TC	No	No
Bidborough Ridge	Bidborough	15	Bidborough PC	No	No
Jockey Lane	Cranbrook	44	Cranbrook & Sissinghurst PC	No	No
Balcombes Hill	Goudhurst	21	Goudhurst PC	No	No
Fowlers Park	Hawkhurst	38	KCC	No	No
The Broadway	Lamberhurst		Lamberhurst PC	No	No

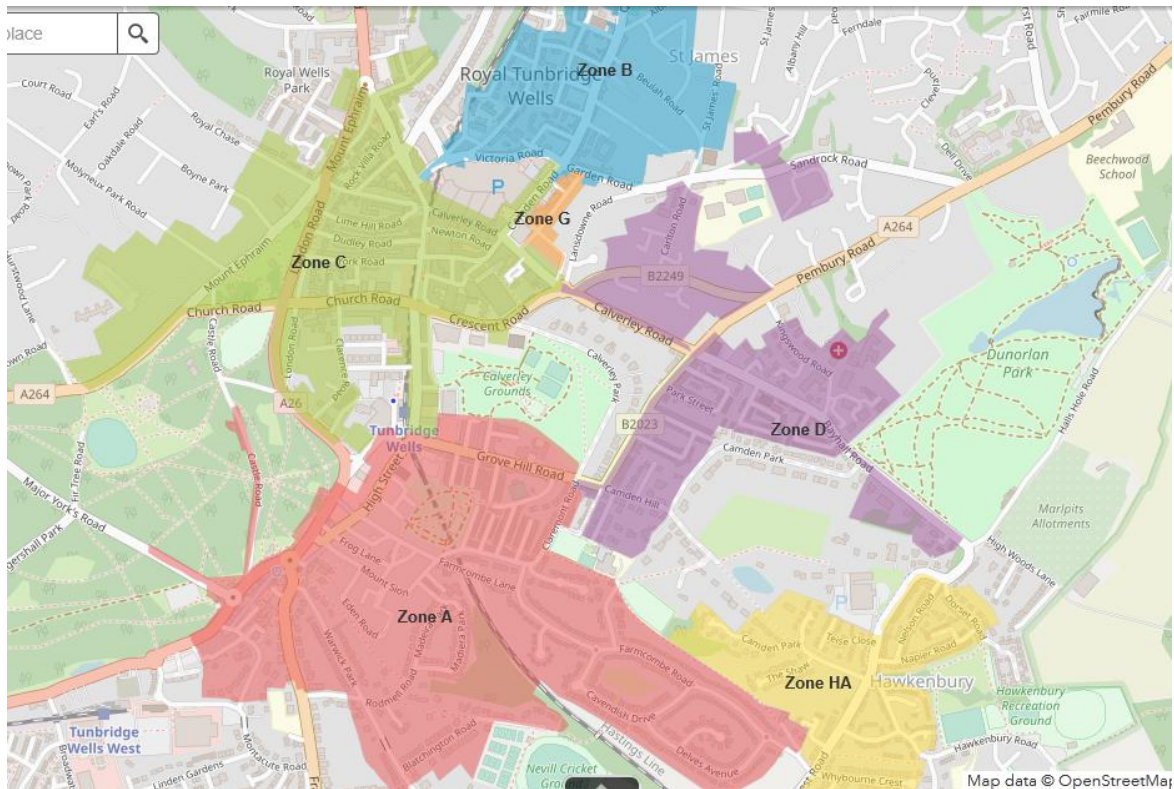
# Appendix C

## Permit Zones

There are 7 distinct permit parking zones in Tunbridge Wells and High Brooms plus one in Paddock Wood. Each has restrictions on use depending on local circumstances. Restrictions are either signed as an area with no road markings or subject to both marked bays and signage.

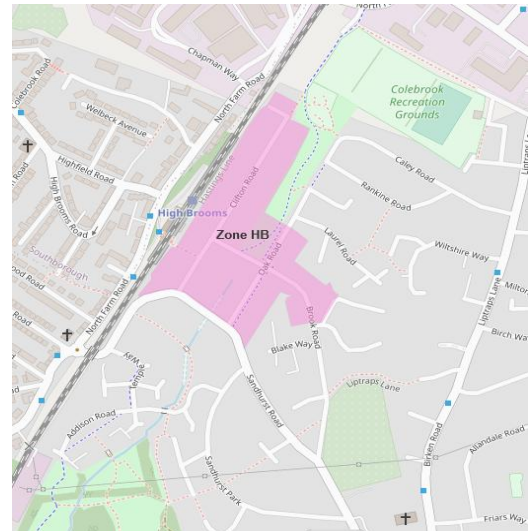
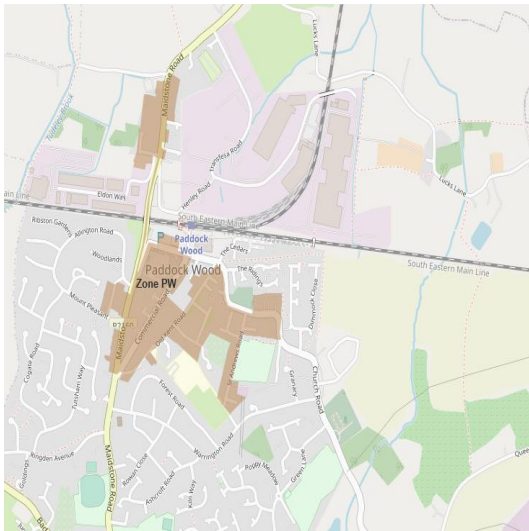
### **Map of Permit Parking Zones A, B, C, D, G, HA**





**Zone HB**

**Zone PW**



## **Permit Parking Zones**

Zone	Eligible Properties	Approx number of spaces	Permits issued at June 2016/2023
A	1820	1190	1101/913
B	1540	565	712/660
C	1390	480	756/611
D	900	425	488/381
G	81	35	44/35
HB	240	58	27/42
HA	520	408	-/272
PW	560	250	113/136