



Leatherhead AHEAD

Moving our town forward together

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Leatherhead High Street – New Waiting Restrictions

Last week, Surrey County Council put a Traffic Order relating to Leatherhead High Street in the Leatherhead Advertiser. This Traffic Order proposes to put a no-waiting restriction to apply between 8am and 6.30pm. Objections to the Order have to be in by 23 June, which only gave people 3 weeks to write in. Grounds for objecting must be in writing, quoting 'ref: 17/8/GEN/MV/AK' and sent to: S. Lee, Head of Transportation, South-West Area Office, Cross Lanes, Guildford GU1 1FA.

The reason for the no-waiting restriction is to stop traffic parking in the High Street when the High Street is supposed to be pedestrianised, something everyone in Leatherhead will support.

However, instead of making the no-waiting times to be between 10am and 4.30pm which are the times the High Street is supposed to have no cars in it, the no-waiting times will be 8am to 6.30pm.

This means that there will be no short-term parking in the High Street between 8am – 10am and 4.30pm – 6.30pm, as there is at present, and Surrey County Council are effectively taking away a lot of Leatherhead's 'pop and shop' parking.

Consultation?

Although it is a legal requirement to put this traffic order in the Public Notices Section of the paper, this is in section 2 which a vast number of people probably don't read.

There was no mention of this change to available parking times in the main body of the paper. Surrey County Council should have made sure that these changes to the High Street were well publicized, so that as many people as possible would know about this change to when they will be able to park and be able to comment on it.

Apparently some people have been advised of these proposals. However, no mention of it was made at the Town Centre Forum on 17 May, even though all three of our local Surrey County Councillors were present.

Lots of consultation then! As Professor John Whitelegg said, at the public meeting regarding the Phase 2 works in 2002, "The history of consultation and information sharing in Leatherhead is not a happy one." While no-one wants to re-hash all past events, one has to learn from history and this change of times for traffic in the High Street seems to be a classic example of Surrey County Council not consulting with the public as they should.

Do all the traders/shops in Leatherhead know about this proposed change, and have they been asked for their view?

What the people want!

Leatherhead Tomorrow's report says that "Leatherhead is perceived as a town with inadequate parking. All the questionnaires, surveys and discussions have called for more parking, free or cheaper parking and the opportunity for half hour 'pop and shop' parking." It also says "Leatherhead is regarded as offering poor parking facilities, particularly for shoppers", and "There are limited 'pop and shop' facilities ...". Also, one of the surveys carried out said that the amount of, and convenience of, on-street parking was POOR.

By making the no waiting restriction from 8.00 to 6.30pm Surrey County Council are effectively taking away a lot of the 'pop and shop' parking that Leatherhead actually has.

There are some people who would like the High Street completely pedestrianised, and there are some people who would like the High Street completely open to traffic one-way. Therefore, most people are happy with the compromise of the High Street being opened for parking before 10am and after 4.30pm, as it has been for 4 years. However, at present when parking is permitted, there is a lot of inconsiderate parking taking place and the High Street is a complete mess. Despite Leatherhead *Ahead* and others pointing out over the last 3 years that something must be done, Surrey County Council has ignored the situation when they have had ample time/opportunity to come up with a solution.

The most important thing residents want is for clear demarcation between traffic and pedestrians, and clear signs where parking is allowed. When the shops are open, this free parking should be limited to 30 minutes. This has been said many times!

A lot of people come into Leatherhead after 4.30 because they can park briefly in the High Street, and if they are not able to do this in Leatherhead, they will go and shop at all the other places where they CAN park outside the shops. It is being ignored that it was only after the High Street was opened part time to traffic and 'pop and shop' parking became available outside the High Street shops that Leatherhead came back to life again.

The waiting restriction up to 6.30pm will just mean that cars will park all over the place later in the day. Pedestrians in the High Street will still be at risk and the Halifax cash machine will still get blocked by inconsiderate parking.

The Way Forward?

Leatherhead *Ahead* suggests that Surrey County Council put in the waiting restrictions from 10 am to 4.30pm, which will remove the parked cars during the day when the High Street is supposed to be pedestrianised, but will still enable residents to 'pop and shop'.

We also suggest that Surrey County Council put a gate across the top of the High Street to stop people entering from that direction as they do at present - there seems to be room for a gate to be fixed back apart from possibly blocking two gas/electricity meter boxes, but presumably this could be accommodated.

There is now a working group currently putting together a review of what changes should be made to the High Street to make it work properly for everyone. They are then supposed to be consulting the Residents and workers in the town. Hopefully then a sensible solution which most people will be happy with, will come into effect.