

**Mrs Laura R Sleight**

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Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services  
East Herts Council  
Wallfields, Pegs Lane  
Hertford  
Herts, SG13 8EQ



30 May 2014

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Petition in response to proposed car parking changes in East Herts**

I understand you are the best person to contact regarding petitions submitted to East Herts Council.

I am writing to make you aware of a petition I have submitted to Councillor Paul Phillips this morning, in response to the East Herts parking consultation which ends today. Please find enclosed a copy of the covering letter for your information.

Because people continued to sign my online petition after I submitted the paper copies, the final figures vary slightly from those stated in my letter to Councillor Phillips. The petition now has a total of **2011** signatures, including **1811** from paper petitions and **200** from the online version.

I understand the responses are being co-ordinated by Mott Macdonald so Councillor Phillips will no doubt pass all the details and signed petitions onto his contacts there.

If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A large white rectangular box redacting the signature of Laura Sleight.

Laura Sleight  
Hertford resident

Copy

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Councillor Paul Phillips  
 East Herts Council  
 Wallfields, Pegs Lane  
 Hertford  
 Herts, SG13 8EQ

30<sup>th</sup> May 2014

Dear Councillor Phillips,

**Re: Response to consultation on proposed car parking changes in East Herts**

As you are aware, I have been gathering views in Hertford on the car park changes proposed by East Herts Council since mid-March.

As a Hertford resident myself, I am strongly opposed to the introduction of evening car park charges, which I believe would be highly unfair on residents and evening workers who have no choice but to park in the council run car parks.

As you will see from the responses enclosed, many local people share my views and have serious concerns about the impact on evening trade and the potentially adverse effect on the economic vitality of Hertford.

On 17<sup>th</sup> March 2014, I launched a petition (both online and in paper form) calling on the council to scrap evening car park charges and provide fair parking for all (see Appendix A). The petition now has nearly 2,000 signatures, which I'm sure you will agree shows the strength of local feeling on this issue. I have pleasure in enclosing these signed petitions for your consideration as part of the consultation (see Appendix B).

As well as gathering signatures for my petition, I have also compiled a significant amount of feedback on these proposals, both verbally and in writing through the online version of the petition. For your information, I have enclosed a summary of the main feedback which I hope is helpful (see Appendix C).

In particular, I have received a huge amount of interest from local businesses (both daytime and evening traders) who are extremely concerned about these proposals and the potential impact on the local economy. The vast majority do not feel that half an hour's free parking justifies the evening charges.

In an effort to represent these views, I have compiled a 'joint statement from businesses' opposing the proposed charges, which has been signed by over 60 different commercial enterprises in Hertford (see Appendix D).

*Please note: Due to limited resources I was not able to visit every business in Hertford to gather their views but I would hope the council has been consulting with traders independently. However, my petition was displayed in 80 individual businesses, indicating wider support.*

Finally, I have spoken to many local residents who would be directly affected by the introduction of evening charges because they have no choice but to park in the council run car parks overnight.

These people already have to pay up to £1,400 a year in car park charges in areas where residents' permits are not available and would have to pay up to £260 a year in evening charges under these proposals. Residents' permits are already issued in some town centre car parks and many people strongly believe that these should be available in all town centre car parks, especially if the proposed new charges go ahead.

To help represent their views, I have compiled a 'joint statement from residents' opposing the proposed charges and calling on the council to introduce residents' permits in all car parks (see Appendix E).

*Please note: Due to limited resources I was only able to visit residential properties in Fore Street and adjoining roads over one weekend, but I would hope the council has been consulting with residents independently. As a result I have only gathered a small sample of signatures, but I hope this is a useful indication of the demand for residents' permits in this area.*

Further to our recent discussions, I understand that East Herts Council is planning to review Hertford's residents' permit schemes in the foreseeable future.

*I strongly believe that this work should be done in parallel to this parking consultation, as the proposals would have a direct impact on residents' parking. Many local people think it would be highly unfair to introduce evening parking charges without offering the option of residents' permits to those people who currently rely on parking in these car parks.*

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like any further information on any of these points, otherwise I look forward to your response in due course. I would also be grateful if you could advise me of the process for scheduling a council debate on my petition as it has received over 1,355 signatures.

Yours sincerely,

Laura Sleight  
Hertford resident

cc. Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services, East Herts Council  
Matthew Ring, ITL Traffic Engineering, Mott Macdonald  
Laura Burnip, Hertfordshire Mercury

## **Appendix A**

### **Sample of the 'Fair Parking for All' petition**

**\*\*\* SIGN HERE TO DEMAND FAIR PARKING FOR ALL! \*\*\***

## **Petition against new parking charges in Hertford**

For years, Hertford residents who rely on council run car parks have faced a parking postcode lottery. Some are issued residents' permits for only £36 a year while others are forced to buy daily tickets costing up to £1,400 a year.

**Now, East Herts Council wants to introduce evening charges (£1 from 4-10pm, except all-day tickets), costing residents and others up to £260 a year.**

The changes are proposed for Hertford, Ware and Bishops Stortford and they're due to launch a consultation in May to gather public views. We need to act NOW!

Evening charges would be BAD for visitors, BAD for local businesses and even WORSE for residents.

If you care about the rights of local people in Hertfordshire, please sign this petition to show that we have a voice.

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**Sign below if you want East Herts Council to SCRAP evening car park charges and provide fair parking for all:**

<b>Full name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Signature</b>

For more information or signature sheets, please contact Laura Sleight at [fairparkingforall@yahoo.com](mailto:fairparkingforall@yahoo.com) or visit the **Fair Parking For All** group on Facebook.

Official information is also now available at [www.eastherts.gov.uk/ehparkingchanges](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/ehparkingchanges).

## **Appendix B**

**Signed 'Fair Parking For All' petitions**

**(1,963 signatures @ 8.30am)**

*-submitted to Councillor Paul Phillips 30/05*

## **Appendix C**

### **Summary of feedback from local people**

## **Appendix D**

**Joint statement from Hertford businesses**

**(61 signatures)**



Signed copies submitted to Council by Paul Phillips 30/10/14

## Joint statement from Hertford businesses, May 2014

As a representative of a commercial business operating in Hertford, I strongly oppose the car park changes proposed by East Herts Council.

I believe that evening car park charges would be damaging to evening trade and a potential threat to the economic vitality of Hertford.

I'm also concerned about the impact of evening charges on members of staff who park in the council run car parks.

I do not believe that evening charges are justified by the provision of half an hour's free parking during the day/evening.

Full name + title	Company + contact details	Signature	No. staff using car parks (if known)	Additional comments

## **Appendix E**

**Joint statement from Hertford residents  
(33 signatures)**



## 'Fair Parking For All' campaign feedback

### Local businesses:

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- My petition opposing the charges is supported by over 70 local businesses in Hertford, including all major hotels / guest houses and the majority of pubs, bars and restaurants in the town centre.
- Local businesses are very concerned about the impact of evening charges on trade, whether they are likely to be directly affected or not. They are worried about the impact on the economy if customers are deterred from visiting Hertford when free parking is available in 'rival' towns.

A representative from the Jungle Bar said: *"These charges would be a disaster for businesses like mine. What's to stop people going out in places like St Albans instead, where you can park anywhere for free after 6.30pm? Surely the council should be trying to boost local business, not drive people away?"*

A signatory to my petition said: *"Being in the theatre scene, I'm well aware of the damage it could do to the thriving theatre industry in the town, with the threat to both Hertford Theatre itself and to the smaller theatre up near Richard Hale, which would result in members of the society having to pay parking simply to attend rehearsals. It's quite simply going to kill what remains of the town."*

- Evening traders are concerned about the impact on staff who park regularly in council run car parks during the evening, often returning to their cars late at night.

A representative from the Cinnabar Café said: *"My staff often work until 4am, many of them female. They would either have to fork out daily for the new parking charges or look for free parking further afield, which would present a safety issue at that time of night."*

- Most of the hotels and guest houses in Hertford rely on council car parks for their customers and some reimburse parking fees, so would see a significant financial impact from the new charges. For example: Hertford House Hotel has 22 rooms with no parking; Salisbury Arms has 31 rooms with only 28 parking spaces (including 4 for staff); Cinnabar Café has 14 rooms with no parking; Dog & Whistle has 5 rooms with no parking; and Rigsby's Guest House has 7 rooms with no parking.

A representative from Rigsby's Guest House said: *"I do find it hard that they want to do this and it will have a massive impact in the town. The car park in St Andrew Street gets full on a Tuesday & Thursday with people going to the theatre. Last year I paid on average £300 pounds back to my guests to help compensate for their stay as I pay for the first five hours."*

- Daytime businesses seem unconvinced about the benefits of 30 minutes' free parking, when it can often take that long to get from the car parks to a single shop and back. They would like to see research that supports the proposals. Many would rather have a 'pay-on-exit' system in the car parks, which has long been called for by some traders.

## Local residents:

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- Due to the age of most of the buildings in Hertford town centre, many do not have off-street parking and on-street parking is limited to 30 minutes, so many residents rely on parking in the council run car parks. Residents' permits are currently available in Hartham Common and Port Vale car parks, but not others such as Gascoyne Way, St Andrew's Street or London Road.
- Some residents are regularly out during the day so their primary use of the car parks is overnight when the charges do not currently apply. These residents are worried about the additional cost of evening charges (up to £260/year for daily parking) and the inconvenience of having to buy tickets.

One resident said: *"I'm really pleased to hear about the petition and have been meaning to contact the council myself as night parking charges would really affect us! I have asked everyone I know to sign and will keep on asking everyone."*

- Other residents are based in Hertford during the day so they have to pay the full daily fee of up to £4.60 (via Ringo) to park in the council run car parks, or up to £1,400 a year. While these proposals do not apparently include any increase to long-stay tickets, these residents are already concerned about the significant parking costs and the inconvenience of having to buy daily tickets, and they would like to see parking permits introduced for residents.

Comments on the petition included:

*"Don't forget that £1,400 doesn't guarantee you a parking space either! If the car park is full you've wasted £1.4k!"*

*"Very unfair difference in charges for residents permits, I had no idea."*

*"With more and more development taking place in the town centre I believe all residents should be issued with a parking permit ... unfair to those using council car parks"*

*"Hertford town has no parking for residents. It makes me sick to the stomach that residents in nearby roads are granted a permit & I am not allowed one. I am sick of paying for car parks. It's totally unfair!"*

*"Our street has no residential parking so need the car park in evening."*

- Homeowners and landlords whose properties rely on parking in council run car parks are concerned that the new charges might dissuade people from moving to the town centre, which could make it harder to sell or rent their properties.

A signatory for the petition said: *"I feel this change would be detrimental in encouraging people to live in the residential areas in the center of Hertford. We should be encouraging people to live in the center of Hertford as surely this is a group of people that will support local trade and therefore avoid more empty shop units."*

- Residents of roads with unrestricted parking in and around the town centre are concerned about the impact of displaced parking if the proposals go ahead.

A representative from West Street Residents' Association said: *"This policy would clearly worsen parking conditions in residential areas around the town centre. If people have to pay in the car parks they'll find other places to park for free and we'll find it even more difficult to park in our own street. This is already a very significant issue during the day and if it became an issue at night as well then it would be very annoying indeed."*

Another comment on the petition said: *"We get lots of commuters parking along the already congested New Road [Ware]. These new parking charges will only make it worse and particularly bad for those of us who live along these 'free parking' roads."*

#### Visitors:

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- Many Hertford visitors I have spoken to were concerned about the evening charges and some people currently plan their visits to park after 6.30pm to avoid charges.
- Many people were unsure of the benefits of half an hour free parking. Some asked why it wasn't an hour like some other places.

#### Comments on my petition include:

*"We come to spend money in Hertford a lot, so cheaper parking is more helpful."*

*"I regularly use Hertford town centre in the evening but if they introduce parking charges in the evenings then like the Galleria in Hatfield I will no longer use the restaurants and theatre in the town ."*

*"30 min to park is no time to shop in Hertford at least it should be an hour min. as in Welwyn Garden so this would not encourage me to come to Hertford during the day for shopping as for the evening charge residents must be appalled by the councils lack of consideration for them."*

*"A perfect example of a short sighted local council, hell bent on giving a short term boost to revenues while paying no attention to the long term consequences. Even in Mayfair it is possible to park after 6pm free of charge!!! These pathetic taxes destroy more than they create and only serve to frustrate and annoy the citizens. Work more efficiently with what you've got rather than trying to raise more money from us to waste."*

*"BAD for eating out in the evening"*

*"Hertford needs people to visit it - not to frighten them away with additional parking fees - that all disappear into a Council 'black hole'!!"*

*"A crazy idea which will inevitably put people off eating out in Ware. Are these people crazy?"*

*"Hertford is a busy, thriving town in the evenings. Parking fees would be the death knell."*

*"This could be the death knell for numerous Hertford activities in the evenings. The sop offered for daytime parking has no bearing on what happens in the evening - Hertford Theatre audiences would effectively have £1 added to all their ticket prices for instance."*

*"We regularly come into Hertford in the evening and prefer to use the car parks rather than trying to find spaces in the side streets. Charging for evening parking will stop people coming to Hertford or else they will abandon their cars in any residential side streets where they can find a space."*