

## **CRA Deputation to Council on 23/2/17**

On 7th February we raised practical concerns with the Wanstead Parking Scheme, in this deputation we outline our budgetary concerns.

Installation would cost £93,000 with unnecessary elements removed at further cost. In principle we take offence to the Council playing with our money in so casual a manner.

The scheme includes poles, signs and line markings, but no meters and Ringo is an existing system. Therefore, the cost must be fairly even across the area and as most of the scheme is to be Permit Parking, the bulk of the cost must relate to Permit Parking.

The justification for Permit Parking is anticipated displacement from the High Street, but as we have argued previously, displacement would be minimal and cause few problems. The vast majority of the proposed Permit Parking roads have driveways and so revenue from such roads would be extremely low - why would you buy a permit if you can park on your drive for free?

To avoid such wasteful expenditure, the Council must install the scheme in a phased manner only if displacement is proved to become a problem. A phased installation will drastically reduce the installation cost and avoid removal costs - a much more efficient approach!

Permit Parking controls will also have a negative impact on "park and work" commuters who are essential to the Wanstead economy when they shop and lunch in Wanstead. Many High Street shops have already closed with those remaining already suffering from general economic pressures - many more may close as a result of this scheme. If Starbucks cant make it work, what chance do the independent shops have?

With this in mind, the Council must consider the effect of reduced business rate income in years to come, not just the short term revenue gains which will be minimal.

As a residents group we cant speak as to how much revenue Pay and Display on the High Street would yield, but certainly revenue from Pay and Display in remote roads such as Chestnut Drive, Overton Drive and Warren Road, will be minimal. Such bays will probably remain empty and just add to parking congestion elsewhere.

So in summary, this scheme is unnecessarily costly, wasteful, will yield minimal revenue, could impact business rate income and should be abandoned in its entirety.

Question asked: You mention that lack of profitability has led to Starbucks leaving Wanstead. The Council will obviously lose another rate income as a result. What further impact on the Council's budget would you anticipate a new Wanstead parking scheme having?

Answer: Recent events have shown how important it is to take the commercial aspect of Wanstead into account when planning anything there, including a parking scheme. Councils will soon obtain the money raised by business rates, which will be a vital part of their future budgets. However, there is concern among Government Ministers that the scale of these increases will lead to business closures and this is already happening in Wanstead. The danger is now being recognised by Philip Hammond planning to introduce "transitional relief" to help struggling businesses in the next Budget. The BBC says that the Government does not want to "kill the goose that lays the golden egg."

If lack of customer parking adds to the problems in Wanstead, then there is a danger that the drop in custom will lead to some businesses, which are already financially fragile, closing. At least eight businesses have already closed with three more considering their future.

Many people from outside Redbridge come to Wanstead for shopping and recreation, which aids the Council budget. New businesses have opened recently with others showing cautious interest.

So tread carefully... The current parking scheme is not perfect but it generally works. The last thing the Council budget needs is a street full of charity shops supported with Council rates relief, thereby letting the "golden egg" slip through its fingers.