

Agenda Item No: 14
Report To: CABINET
Date of Meeting: 12th July 2018



Report Title: Proposed Multi Storey Car Park, Station Road, Ashford (Bowling Alley Car Park).

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Portfolio Holders for: Cllr Bradford – Community Safety and Wellbeing
Cllr Galpin – Corporate Property
Cllr Shorter – IT and Finance

Summary: The council currently provides 1467 public car parking spaces to serve Ashford town centre on land that it owns.

The town centre offer is changing therefore the council needs to ensure there remains enough parking provision to meet demand in the future, while also allowing regeneration and development opportunities to come forward, which will benefit the overall prosperity of the borough.

Dover Place Car Park has been identified as suitable for redevelopment, with the opening of CQ38 new office building showing the potential that the redevelopment of this site has for bringing investment, growth and employment opportunities to the town centre. Furthermore, the council has a temporary car park on Elwick Road and has only a limit period of use determined by the planning permission and as such alternative provision needs to be sought.

The redevelopment of these sites has the potential to create a shortage of parking provision in the town centre and work is needed to identify a solution to this problem. It is proposed to explore the potential of the construction of a multi storey car park on the existing the council owned Station Road car park site at the rear of the bowling alley.

This report seeks authority to allocate resources to develop these proposals to a stage that will enable the preparation of a business case, construction cost estimate and planning application.

Key Decision: YES

**Significantly
Affected Wards:**

All Town Centre wards particularly Victoria.

Recommendations: **The Cabinet is recommended to authorise expenditure of up to £190,000 and the commitment of council staff resources to scope the options available to the council to construct a multi storey car park on the existing Station Road car park site.**

Policy Overview:

Promote growth and achieve greater economic prosperity for the borough which will support the delivery of a viable and sustainable replacement for the Formula Grant through the generation of income for the council.

The additional car parking will enhance the car parking offer for its customers and in doing so an efficient and cost effective proposal.

**Financial
Implications:**

The financial implications of this report require the allocation of £190,000 from reserves set aside for corporate projects.

Following this work a full business plan will be produced for a future multi-storey car park which will include all capital investment required, the operating income and expenditure and how the project will be funded.

Legal Implications:

Legal implications will be considered through the feasibility study and reported at the end of this stage.

**Equalities Impact
Assessment:**

EIA is not needed at this stage.

**Other Material
Implications:**

None

**Exempt from
Publication:**

NO

**Background
Papers:**

None

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Introduction and Background

Existing Parking Provision

1. The council currently provides 1467 public car parking spaces in Ashford town centre. A further 1502 spaces are available in privately operated car parks.
2. The Ashford International Station Car Parks (Euro Star services) contain a further 1850 spaces. These are available to all visitors to the town but are some distance from the town centre and primarily aimed at commuters and users of the Euro Star.

New Car Parks Approved for Delivery in 2019

3. New “ground level” public car parks are being delivered alongside the Elwick Place development and on Victoria Way. Elwick Place will open in December 2018 whilst Victoria Way is being provided by the developer of the new residential scheme opposite the site and is expected early in 2019.
 - a. The new Elwick Place Car Park will contain 282 spaces
 - b. The new Victoria Way Car Park will contain circa 116 spaces
4. A total of circa 398 new parking spaces will be provided by the end of 2019, however, it should be remembered that these spaces are intended to support visitors to the new Elwick Place complex and the new Victoria Way development and cannot be considered a direct replacement for any losses elsewhere in the town centre.

Town Centre Master Planning

5. The council is developing an Ashford Town Centre Masterplan which has identified suitable redevelopment sites located on land in Ashford Borough Council ownership which are currently utilised for public car parking.
6. Key sites are Dover Place and Elwick Road (temporary) car parks which currently deliver the below public parking provision:

Elwick Road Temporary Car Park 110 spaces
Dover Place 180 spaces

7. Dover Place has already had its capacity reduced with the construction of CQ38 and is earmarked for further development as the market matures. The Temporary Car Park on Elwick road will be developed as part of the future phases of the Elwick Rd development site, the first phase of which is being delivered this year.

8. A multi storey car park has the potential to grow car parking capacity within the town centre and will offset against the potential loss of circa 290 spaces over the next few years.
9. The need to start planning for replacement parking was recognised last year and the council engaged the services of Design Consultants Willmott Dixon and KSS to look at potential sites in and around the town centre on which a multi storey car park could be constructed.
10. The resulting report identified the existing Station Road Car Park site, at the rear of the bowling alley, as the most suitably located and economical option to accommodate a multi storey car park. The site currently provides 108 parking spaces at ground level.

The Proposal

11. It is proposed to undertake a feasibility study looking at the options available to the Council to construct a multi storey public car park on the existing Station Road site to maximise the number of spaces.
12. It is intended that the multi storey car park would replace the spaces lost to redevelopment and potentially deliver additional spaces.
13. The Community Safety and Wellbeing Service would be the operator / end user of any new multi storey car park whilst Corporate Property Service would be responsible for the buildings maintenance. The feasibility study will consider the following items when setting out the car park specification:
 - a. The building must be clad in a suitably aesthetically pleasing material and incorporate an attractively designed feature focal point on the southwest corner visible from Station Road and the Commercial Quarter.
 - b. The design must aspire to meet the “Park Mark” specification standard and incorporate the provision for vehicle charging points.
 - c. Bay sizes must be generous and located to make manoeuvring of vehicles an easy and comfortable experience.
 - d. Energy efficient with the potential option to add PV panels to the building.
 - e. CCTV will be incorporated into the building on every floor.
 - c. There is the aspiration to create a safe, clean and comfortable environment in which to park.
14. Tariffs will be set to reflect the user mix that is expected e.g. commuters, town centre workers, shoppers and other visitors.
15. A project delivery programme will be established in agreement with the Project Champion and “end user“ Head of Service and will reflect their needs, the amount of time required to submit and determine the planning application and the time required to design procure and construct the new car park.

Implications and Risk Assessment

16. The potential implications of the council not approving the proposals set out in this report include:
- Affordable town centre public parking provision not keeping pace with demand affecting residents, businesses and commuters.
 - A missed opportunity for the council to generate income through the development of the current car park sites.
 - A slowing of the economic growth of the town through a lack of investment in the necessary infrastructure to support its development.

17. An initial assessment of the proposals has been undertaken and the following key risks identified which will be explored further through the feasibility study:

Risk 1 – The number of spaces that the building can accommodate may be restricted due to insufficient traffic capacity being available at the exiting Station Road junctions issue.

Mitigation measure – Early engagement with KHS local traffic officers and planning consultants is imperative to commission the necessary traffic assessment surveys needed to establish the available capacity within the local highway network to accommodate ABC's car parking proposals. This may lead to the need for local junction improvements or a reduction in the proposed parking provision depending on the associated costs.

Risk 2 – A suitable location to accommodate temporary parking spaces is needed to deal with the temporary displacement of vehicles from the existing Station Road car park during the multi storey car park construction phase.

Mitigation measure - Early establishment by Parking Services of the expected impact of the temporary closure of Station Road car park is needed to inform the project as to the number of temporary spaces required and where they can be provided.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

18. The identified owners and occupiers of land immediately adjacent to the Station Road Car Park site have been written to by the Deputy Head of Community Safety and Wellbeing informing them of the councils intentions to investigate options to locate a MSCP on the site.

Other Options Considered

19. **Do nothing** – The council could choose not to replace the lost car parking spaces when the existing sites are developed. This would leave private car park operators pick up the displaced business but reduce parking revenue income for the council. The need for additional capital investment for the car park would however be avoided and thus available for other projects.

20. This approach would not be in line with the council's policy to promote redevelopment to bring economic investment, growth and employment opportunities to the town. Subsequently it was rejected.
21. **Alternative site within the town centre** – As previously stated, the council appointed design consultants Willmott Dixon and KSS looked at five potential sites in and around the town centre on which a multi storey car park could be constructed. Their findings are presented in the *Ashford Car Park Sites Options Appraisal Report dated September 2017*.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

22. The Ashford Car Park Sites Options Appraisal Report concluded that it would be possible to build on all identified sites, but singled out Station Road car park as the most economical to construct and best located to serve the council's existing and future customers.

Next Steps in Process

23. This report seeks authority to commit resources to scope the options available to the council to construct a multi storey car park on the existing Station Road car park site and generate the following outputs:
 - The preparation of a business case to demonstrate the proposal is viable.
 - Evaluation of project options, feasibility study and outline designs.
 - Commissioning of site surveys and assessments to support the preparation of the outline designs and planning application preparation.
 - Consultation with key stakeholders and early engagement with planning statutory consultees.
 - Development of designs to a level sufficient to permit the submission of a planning application.
 - Preparation of a budget cost estimate for the delivery of the new car park and provision of temporary car parking.
24. A further report will come to cabinet later in the year to obtain the necessary approval to start construction.

Conclusion

25. The Council's policy to promote redevelopment in the town centre to bring economic investment, growth and employment opportunities is reliant on the availability of suitably located land and the provision of supporting infrastructure.
26. The proposals in this report support this policy through the potential provision of new infrastructure that will allow land to be available for redevelopment.

Portfolio Holder's Views

27. *Ashford Town Centre is going from strength to strength. Ensuring a supply of modern and safe parking to complement the economic growth that is taking place is vital for all who work and visit the town. A new multi storey car park is very much a part of our vision for the future and therefore I fully support the necessary preparatory work being undertaken to turn this proposal into reality.*

Cllr Bradford – Community Safety and Wellbeing

28. *This report outlines the importance of the provision of adequate car parking for the continued economic and social development of Ashford Town and the place that this site can have as a location of a multi storey car park. New parking provision is needed to accommodate new residents, visitors and businesses. It would also compensate for parking spaces which are being lost on Dover Place and potentially at Elwick Road temporary car park. A multi-storey car park also gives flexibility for the next phase of regeneration. The project as described is the vital preparation work to test viability of a multi-storey car park and, if viable, taking the project through to the submission of a planning application. This is a vital piece in the jigsaw of Ashford's revitalisation and regeneration. I therefore commend this to Cabinet*

Cllr Galpin – Corporate Property

28. *This report sets out the clear objective of preparing the Town for the planned and as yet aspirational developments for the future. This is fully in line with the council's aspiration to make the town more welcoming for both residents and visitors and to help businesses to thrive in the current evolution of town centre economies.*

Cllr Shorter – IT and Finance

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