



COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET - 6 JULY 2020
Report Number	AGENDA ITEM (10)
Subject	REVIEW OF OPTIONS AND NEED FOR ADDITIONAL PARKING PROVISION IN CIRENCESTER
Wards affected	St Michael's (directly) All Cirencester wards (indirectly)
Accountable members	Cllr. Mike Every - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance Email: mike.every@cotswold.gov.uk Cllr. Rachel Coxcoon - Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Forward Planning Email: rachel.coxcoon@cotswold.gov.uk
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Summary/Purpose	To set out and consider the options for addressing the car parking requirements in Cirencester and resolve whether or not to submit a planning application for a multi storey car park at Waterloo, Cirencester.
Annexes	Annex A - Planning application details Annex B - Extracts from Waterloo multi storey car park design and Access Statement
Recommendation/s	<i>That Cabinet agree to either:</i> <i>a) progress with the submission of a planning application for a multi storey car park at the Waterloo and the associated scheduled monument application, as set out in the report, and allocate additional funding of £68,000 from the Council Priorities Fund for the planning application fee; or</i> <i>b) to pause the project for 12 months to allow a review of the parking demand in Cirencester and consider options to mitigate the need for additional parking and promote sustainable transport solutions, funding for this work is included in the budget for the update of the Local Plan.</i>

Corporate priorities	<p><i>Ensure that all services delivered by the Council are delivered to the highest standard</i></p> <p><i>Help residents, businesses and communities access the support they need to achieve their ambitions</i></p> <p><i>Respond to the challenges presented by the climate change emergency</i></p> <p><i>Present a Local Plan which is green to the core</i></p>
Key Decision	No
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	<p>In relation to the proposal planning application:</p> <p>March 2017 Meeting with local residents setting out high level proposals</p> <p>June 2017 Public exhibition of initial project proposals</p> <p>From March 2018 a dedicated 'Car Parking Projects' page on Council's website</p> <p>Feb/March 2019 Leaflet drop to local residents and businesses</p> <p>July/Aug 2019 Public consultation on the shortlisted facade designs including public vote</p> <p>Sept and Nov 2019 Waterloo Residents' Forum</p> <p>March 2020 Waterloo Residents' Forum</p> <p>2018/19 and early 2020, monthly meetings of the Car Parking Demand Project Board - minutes published on Council website</p>

1. BACKGROUND FOR MULTISTOREY CAR PARK PROVISION

- 1.1.** Work carried out relating to parking demand in Cirencester, together with the adopted Local Plan 2011 - 2031, identifies a current and anticipated shortfall in parking within the town of c.350 spaces (during the life of the current Local Plan of 2011-2031). The Local Plan includes policies relating to alternative use of land in Cirencester which is currently utilised for car parking. Alternative car parking provision may be required to enable the alternative land use.
- 1.2.** The Local Plan states: 'Decked parking has emerged as the optimum solution for increasing parking capacity, with the Waterloo car park identified as the preferred location'. Additionally it states that 'Once sufficient additional car parking has been provided, the redevelopment potential of other car park(s), which may no longer be required for parking, could be 'unlocked'.'
- 1.3.** Pre-application advice obtained in January 2017 states that the principle of a Multi Storey Car Park could be supported subject to a suitable design.
- 1.4.** Following feasibility work on preferred sites, in February 2017, the Council agreed to allocate funds to support the preparation of a planning application for a multi storey car park at The Waterloo, Cirencester. It also agreed to request a further report to approve the principles for a detailed planning application and the business case for the development, prior to the planning application submission.
- 1.5.** In September 2017, Cabinet agreed to allocate additional funds for the appointment of an architect for the external façade via an independently run design competition. This was on the basis that any car park design put forward 'should be part of a formal selection process, as a suitable design is so critical to the success of this project'.
- 1.6.** The project to develop a planning application for the Waterloo multi storey car park, has proceeded with two distinct deliverables:

 - The internal core - comprising the foundations, number of levels, internal layout, stair/lift cores - designed by Stripe Consulting
 - The external façade - designed by PCH-a
- 1.7.** Key Appointments have been made as follows:

 - The Environment Partnership (TEP) appointed to prepare the Planning application in February 2017
 - Stripe appointed to design the internal core in July 2018
 - PCH-a appointed to design the façade in September 2019
 - Preferred main contractor - Willmot Dixon informally appointed to support the design process as preferred main contractor under SCAPE framework in February 2019.

1.8. As part of the work carried out by the Project Board the provision of additional parking in the short term, which could also provide decant parking for the town whilst any major scheme was carried out, was a key factor. The following additional car parking has been secured/ agreed for this purpose:

1. Demolition of the Old Memorial Hospital Building resulting in an additional 36 spaces - completed March 2020. This work also forms phase 1 of the overall redevelopment of this site.
2. Planning permission obtained and works on site at the Rugby Club with the creation of a permit holder car park resulting in 158 spaces secured on a 10 year lease. Works due for completion in summer 2020.
3. Agreement to a 3 years lease at a site in Cirencester providing 50 spaces.

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2.1. As detailed in the background information the need for additional car parking in Cirencester is set out as a requirement within the Local Plan.

2.2. The existing strategy is predicated on delivering a decked car park at the Waterloo so that other sites within the town centre can be released to deliver additional housing, employment, leisure and cultural facilities, etc. with the aim of enhancing the overall vitality and vibrancy of the town centre and allowing future growth to take place. However, based on the design now progressed, it is not possible to deliver the additional spaces set out within the Local Plan and accommodate any replacement parking required as a result of developing existing car park sites.

2.3. One of the initial key drivers for the car parking project was the demand for additional car parking in the town centre by existing businesses due to their view on the effect the lack of parking was having on their trading. This was a key point at stakeholder meetings with local businesses carried out in early stages of the project.

2.4. The additional parking need identified within the Local Plan covers the requirement to meet the lack of current capacity at the time of the assessment report, dated February 2017, and the demand over the life of the Local Plan through to 2031. This took into account the development policies included within the Local Plan and recent planning permissions such as the mixed use development at The Steadings, Cirencester. The supply of new spaces is a phased requirement over the life of the plan.

2.5. The provision of 350 additional spaces does not include the requirement, identified within the plan, to replace any car parking spaces lost by the redevelopment of existing car parking sites identified within plan policies. This would be an additional requirement.

- 2.6.** The needs of the town centre are constantly changing, however the overall desire is to have the right mix of facilities, in the right place, to promote a healthy, vibrant town centre and support the businesses within the town, promoting growth with the necessary infrastructure, including car parking capacity in the town, being key to this. Due to the nature of the district's area it is unlikely that sufficient public transport can be provided to link all villages and nearby towns to Cirencester and therefore there will be a continuing need to provide public car parking spaces within or near Cirencester town centre. However it may be possible to reduce car journeys by encouraging and better enabling alternatives to the car, such as safe cycling (pedal and electric) and walking from outlying villages and from within Cirencester itself.
- 2.7.** For the future master planning of the town it is essential to determine how additional parking is to be provided, or if this is not to be provided in line with the current Local Plan policy, how the requirement for parking could be mitigated by alternative measures, such as whether sustainable transport options are achievable.
- 2.8.** It is possible additional assessments will now be required as part of the master planning work for the town centre to understand how visitors, residents and employers will use the existing parking in the town centre, together with their own parking facilities going forward, as a result of the economic impact and potential change in ways of working arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and changing character of the high street.
- 2.9.** A significant amount of the parking need in the town is generated by local trips and therefore there may be an opportunity to embrace people's changing habits over the Covid-19 lockdown period where many have swapped to cycling and walking, therefore encouraging these as ongoing sustainable transport options together with any other opportunities for changing behaviours which would benefit the town and its visitors.
- 2.10** The main parking sites in the town centre are within the Council's ownership and it is well placed to react to these changing circumstances and can decide to reduce parking at other sites to allow for future development, reduced need or to support green and sustainable infrastructure. The Waterloo car park remains well placed on the edge of town, to be a long term solution to the town's parking needs. Its location also supports the reduction of car travel in the town centre itself, In the short term it is unclear whether there will be a need for the amount of parking it will provide.
- 2.11.** The Council has agreed to or has entered into lease arrangements with third parties for additional parking. However, these are not long term positions and the Council is not in control of whether there is an option to extend these current arrangements. Therefore, any longer term decisions on development in the town should take this into account. The primary purpose of these sites was to secure additional parking in the short term plus decant and contractor parking for the

construction of a multi-storey car park on the Waterloo site and a phased redevelopment of other existing car park sites.

2.12. In April 2019, the Council completed the acquisition of a strategic site acquired for future economic development purposes at 27/27A Dyer Street due to the strategic link to the town centre, through this site, to the Waterloo car park. It was considered essential to control this link and hold the ability to improve this pedestrian link into the town as part of the increase in spaces proposed at the Waterloo site. The site also holds potential to provide affordable housing opportunities at upper floors, subject to a viable business case for development and any necessary planning permissions. The site was acquired with planning permission in place for some conversion of the upper floors.

3.0 OPTIONS

3.1. OPTION 1 - Submit a planning application for a Multi-Storey Car Park at the Waterloo

3.1.1 Details of the work and proposal for the design process and the key principles of the proposed planning application for the car park are set out at Annex A.

3.1.2 In summary the application would be for :

- Ground floor plus 4 levels car park
- Total of 639 parking spaces - an increase of 404 spaces including:
 - 35 Disabled
 - 8 Parent and Child
 - 10 Electric vehicle charging points (Infrastructure will be included to enable this number to be scaled up)
- Provides the necessary number of spaces to overcome the approximately 350 space shortfall in parking identified in the Local Plan.

3.1.3 The project is at a point where the planning work is complete and an application could be submitted imminently.

3.1.4 Officers are currently awaiting a response from Historic England on their opinion as to the harm and impact the proposal will have on the scheduled ancient monument and therefore their support or not for the proposal.

3.1.5 Submitting a planning application does not require the Council to take a decision to fund and build the car park at the current time. The decision to build can be taken at a later date once the outcome of the permission is known and work has progressed on the wider town centre master planning etc. Equally, the car park does not necessarily have to be built by the Council. It could seek development partners or other options for funding and delivery.

3.1.6 Taking forward a planning application at this time would seek to support continued growth and existing businesses in the town centre with the ability to meet the needs of the current Local Plan. If approved, permission would provide flexibility over the development of the town centre going forward; by enabling additional development through relocation of spaces from existing car parks into the new

multi-storey car park, potential capacity to remove on street parking for the benefits of green infrastructure or other sustainable transport options. It would allow the options to be considered based on the outcome of the planning process and certainty around the ability to increase parking at the Waterloo site.

3.1.7 The only way to determine whether a car park in the location and of the size proposed is achievable on this site would be by seeking planning permission for the proposal. A decision either way will support future decisions taken about the town centre. If permission is granted, then over time it may be possible to reduce spaces in other car parks for the benefit of development of these sites as capacity will be provided to do so. If the application were refused, the Council would have a decision on the development of this site and could then consider the wider implications on the town as a whole and how it may need to address these.

3.1.8 The planning permission, if granted, would be likely to have a condition requiring the development be commenced within three years. Prior to the date that this permission would be due to expire the Council would need to take a decision to build, to partner or dispose of the site for development, seek to renew the permission or allow the permission to lapse. That decision could be informed by progress on the town centre masterplan and supporting evidence and economy at this stage.

3.1.9 If the demand for parking in the town decreases as a result of the Council's drive to reduce carbon and achieve a modal shift away from car use, or as a result of other factors, the Waterloo could remain the prime parking facility and it would allow other existing car parks to be freed up for redevelopment in line with Masterplan objectives.

3.2 OPTION 2 - Place the project on hold for twelve months to review parking demand and sustainable transport options

3.2.1 Due to the uncertain economic conditions at the current time and the likelihood that businesses and individuals will change the way they work and travel the ongoing demand for parking in the town could be significantly altered

3.2.2 There is therefore an opportunity to pause the current proposals and review the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the demand for parking. This would provide time to reflect and review sustainable transport options and measures in Cirencester as part of the recently approved work to update the Council's adopted Local Plan, the emerging Cirencester Town Centre Masterplan and Cirencester Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan. This could provide options which would mitigate the long term need for the provision of additional parking spaces by reducing the reliance on the car to access Cirencester town centre, thus supporting the Council's Climate Change Emergency declaration and the decarbonisation of the local economy and transport network.

3.2.3 There are costs associated with this option that are unknown at this stage, to carry out the necessary transport reviews and develop sustainable transport options. However, a report is programmed to be presented to Cabinet later this year that will outline the timescales and costs for delivering an updated Local Plan and associated work (e.g. Town Centre Masterplan). Should Members choose this option, a request will be made of the Forward Planning Manager to incorporate these costs as part of the Local Plan update project work.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1. OPTION 1 - Planning Application for MSCP

4.1.1 Costs to date for the work in support of the development for the Waterloo MSCP including feasibility studies, parking demand, facade design competition total approximately £500,000. This does not include costs associated with the decant parking sites or the additional car parking at the Old Memorial Hospital Sheep Street car park site.

4.1.2 Due to reallocation of funds to the acquisition of a strategic site, there will be a requirement to fund the planning application fees for progressing this option in the sum of £68,000. Other than officer resource, this is the only further cost required to progress with the planning application.

4.1.4 The budget available within the Medium Term Financial Strategy is £12.75m for the construction of the car park. This was reduced from the original £15 million to support other town centre strategic sites.

4.1.5 A fully costed business case would be brought to Cabinet and Council for consideration in due course if required.

4.1.6 Indicative capital costs are in the region of £10 million (for an industry standard car park) to £15.1 million for the current design including the sustainability enhancements. Should planning permission be granted and the Council decide to build the car park itself, it is likely that the Council will need to increase the level of capital expenditure provision in its MTFS. A business case will be considered by the Council at a later date.

4.2 OPTION 2 - Place project on hold for twelve months to review parking demand and sustainable transport options

4.2.1. The costs associated with this option would be included in a report to Cabinet later this year which would outline the timescales and costs of delivering an updated Local Plan and associated work (e.g. Town Centre Masterplan). It is anticipated that the costs could be accommodated within the allocation for this work within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

4.2.2 The costs of implementing any proposals as a result of this review of demand and sustainable transport options will be the subject of a further report to Cabinet and Council in due course. This report will include the estimated costs and funding options, which could include funding from third parties.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. The Council has no statutory obligation to provide car parking or to have a Parking Strategy. However, a Parking Strategy provides a framework for the effective delivery of parking and parking management.

6.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

6.1. The risks identified in this section are associated with the two options set out in this report, and not with regard to the project to provide a multi-storey car park as a whole.

6.2 The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the local economy, the potential for shops to close or housing developments to be slowed, is not known, and in the short-term there may not be the need for the additional parking. There is a risk that without additional parking future development of the town could be stifled. It is therefore essential to have an identified route to provide the parking identified within the current adopted local plan or to provide alternative options to mitigate the need for additional parking without compromising the viability and vitality of the town.

6.3 OPTION 1 - Multi storey car park planning application

6.3.1 There is a risk that planning permission is granted but the Council subsequently decides the business case is not sufficiently strong and the development should not be funded. However, planning permission would enable the Council to move forward with the development at any time within three years following permission being granted. It would also provide the option to engage external partners in the funding or development of the car park. In addition, it provides certainty as to how the Council could provide the additional or relocated parking to free up development sites in the town centre if the additional spaces are required.

6.3.2 There is a risk planning permission is not granted, however, the Council has carried out extensive consultation and had regard to all the feedback from statutory consultees, shaping the design to address issues and concerns. However, to understand that it is not possible to develop the site for the proposed multi-storey car park would be valuable to inform the future work on the town centre masterplan.

6.3.3 It is not currently anticipated that any external resources will need to be engaged as part of the determination of this planning application. However, if during the decision-making process there became a need to carry out consultation or challenge due to the site being within the ownership of the Council and therefore it, a need to justify above and beyond the normal decision process, there could be

external costs associated with the Planning team in its LPA function. The level of formal pre-application consultation and engagement as part of the process of developing the scheme has been to a high level throughout which supports the view that it would be unlikely to require additional external costs.

- 6.3.4** Should there be a capacity issue with Officer resources to determine this application due to other priorities in terms of planning applications received, the Council, as applicant, could agree to extend the period of time for the determination of the application.
- 6.3.5** There is a reputational risk of expending further funds, member, officer and public engagement on a significant project which may not be necessary.
- 6.3.6** If planning permission were granted for the car park, developers could seek planning permission for sites due to additional parking this permission would provide. This could be on existing Council owned parking sites, which the Council could control as it will determine when the sites are released for development. However planning permission could be obtained on privately owned sites which would increase the need for parking in the town and could lead to a position where it became essential for the Council to build the multi-storey car park at the Waterloo.
- 6.3.7** There is some financial risk in applying for planning permission for a project without an agreed business case as the final requirements may not be viable, however it is unlikely that this would affect the visual impact of the building.
- 6.3.8** The Council could face criticism as a result of progressing with the application and project as planned without considering the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Council's declaration of a climate emergency.

6.4. OPTION 2 - Place project on hold for twelve months and review parking demand and sustainable transport options

- 6.4.1** That the review of demand identifies a need for additional spaces, even if just to replace the spaces lost due to redevelopment proposals on existing car park sites which will need to be replaced in line with current Local Plan policy. This would delay the provision of additional spaces and thus the redevelopment of these sites. Existing car park sites identified within the current local plan as suitable for redevelopment for alternative uses are the Brewery Car Park and the Forum car park sites.
- 6.4.2** Sustainable transport options are not deliverable and this review delays the availability of additional car parking spaces in Cirencester leading to congestion and a less vibrant town centre.
- 6.4.3** Should the local economy recover quickly following Covid 19, there is a risk of car parking capacity becoming an issue again. However, the Council has already put some measures in place, detailed at 1.8, which should mitigate this risk. Should the Waterloo multi-storey car park subsequently proceed, these would then not be available for decant purposes.

6.4.4The Council could face criticism of not progressing with a planning application and not considering the effect the Covid-19 pandemic could have on parking demand or in failing to consider alternative sustainable transport options as part of the Council's declaration of a climate emergency.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

7.1. Provision for disabled parking will be made, as per national guidelines.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1. The climate change implications of Option 1 to progress with the planning application for the MSCP have been included at Annex A of the report. The progression of Option 2 would entail the review of alternative sustainable transport options and the challenge to reduce the dependency on private motor vehicle transport to reduce carbon emissions.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

9.1. Options are set out within the report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1.The following documents have been identified by the author of the report in accordance with section 100D.5(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and are listed in accordance with section 100 D.1(a) for inspection by members of the public:

- Report to Council: Development of the Waterloo Car Park, Cirencester, for Decked Parking. February 2017
- Report to Cabinet: Cirencester Car Parking. September 2017 (Exempt Item).
- Report to Cabinet: Design Considerations for the Waterloo Car Park. February 2019

10.2.These documents will be available for inspection at the Council Offices at Trinity Road, Cirencester during normal office hours for a period of up to 4 years from the date of the meeting. Please contact the author of the report.

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