



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 5th JULY 2021
Report Number	Agenda Item 7
Subject	REVIEW OF OPTIONS AND NEED FOR ADDITIONAL PARKING PROVISION CIRENCESTER
Wards affected	St Michaels (directly) All Cirencester wards (indirectly)
Accountable member	CLlr Mike Evely Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance Email: Mike Evely@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Mrs Maria Wheatley- Parking Manager Email: maria.wheatley@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To reconsider the options for addressing the car parking requirements in Cirencester.
Annexes	None
Recommendation/s	That Cabinet <i>a) consider a further pause of up to 12 months to allow a review of the parking demand in Cirencester.</i>
Corporate priorities	Ensure that all services delivered by the Council are delivered to the highest standard Help residents, businesses and communities access the support they need to achieve their ambitions Respond to the challenges presented by the climate change emergency Present a Local Plan, which is green to the core.
Key Decision	
Exempt	
Consultees/ Consultation	Forward Planning

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The global epidemic and the subsequent national lockdowns have had a dramatic change on the use of the off-street car parks across the district. Prior to the crisis, Cirencester experienced a shortfall between provision and demand.
- 1.2. At the Cabinet meeting of 6th July 2020 consideration was given to increase the capacity of the Waterloo Car Park, Cirencester. It was agreed that the plans be put on hold for 12 months to enable the Council to assess the potential impact of Covid-19 on car usage and if the plans complied with the administration's climate priorities.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. A review of ticket sales, income and capacity spot checks show that the off-street car parks in Cirencester are at approximately 35% lower when compared against 2019 figures for Apr and May.
- 2.2. Not all age groups in England have received their vaccinations, and the Government has extended the lifting of restrictions from 21st June to 19th July when a further decision will be made.
- 2.3. The move to home working and internet shopping for many people has changed travel and parking behaviour. The Pandemic has accelerated changes in the traditional nature of high street and the declining dominance of retail.
- 2.4. It has long been understood that the key to delivering a Cirencester town centre masterplan is the "unlocking" of prime town centre sites. The key to the lock is provision of an alternative public parking facility (or facilities) to allow the town centre car parks to be released for phased redevelopment. It is now less certain that the original premise will be delivered as envisaged in the Council's Local Plan. Feasibility work (an early evidence gathering stage in the masterplan process) together with a new district-wide Sustainable Transport Strategy will investigate and review transport, parking and accessibility needs, amongst other issues. This work will help the Council to consider the need to build a new decked car park, especially in the context of the changing nature of the traditional high street, active travel and meeting net zero targets.
- 2.5. It will take several months before a new pattern of parking usage is known, and as such it is recommended that the decision to create additional parking spaces is deferred. It is recommended that a minimum of 6 months data is gathered once all restrictions are lifted.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. None directly arising from this report. The impact upon the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy will be included in the refresh of the Strategy which forms part of the Council's budget setting process.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The Council has no statutory duty to provide parking, however it does so to support the local economy.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1.** Proceeding with the decked car park when parking demand has decreased for a sustained period would affect the business case and potentially place the Council at increased financial risk.
- 5.2.** It would be a risk to consider building significant new infrastructure without first assessing the anticipated changing nature of the 'traditional' high street, recent changes to permitted development rights for E Class Uses and considering local actions to promote more active and sustainable forms of travel. Making a decision in isolation of a revised Local Plan strategy for the town centre and the Cirencester Town Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to facilitate coordinated redevelopment of key sites and will hamper the Council's and Town Council's ability to fully realise positive place shaping outcomes.
- 5.3.** A lack of established demand for additional parking may adversely affect the Planning Application, as the need for the development would be a key consideration in the planning balance.
- 5.4.** A Masterplan for Cirencester is under development and it could identify the provision of decked parking as an essential element of the town centre strategy. Delaying the decision to submit the planning application may delay the delivery of the benefits from the implementation of the Masterplan.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 6.1.** None.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1.** None associated with pausing the project. The Council continues work to develop a sustainable transport strategy which will promote more active forms of travel in the District.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 8.1.** The Council could proceed with the decked car park proposals but due to the change in parking demand and the risks highlighted above, this is not recommended.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1.** None.