



To: Executive Councillor for Planning and Transport  
Report by: Head of Specialist Services  
Relevant scrutiny committee: Environment 17/10/14  
Wards affected: All Wards  
EqIA Undertaken: Yes

## **Future of Park Street Car Park**

### **Key Decision**

#### **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1. A report examining viable options for the future of Park Street multi-storey car park was presented to members in June 2012. It considered the outline business case for refurbishing the car park and examined the potential and implications of alternative redevelopment of the site.
- 1.2. The report found that due to the deteriorating structural condition of the car park, it could not be left in its current state.
- 1.3. The Executive Councillor's recommendations included an agreement to the principle of consulting the public and stakeholders about the options to refurbish, or to redevelop the Park Street car park. Authority was delegated to the Director of Environment in consultation with the Executive Councillor to carry out a public consultation exercise to determine the best option and report the results to the Council in due course.
- 1.4. A public consultation exercise was conducted between 18 August and 19 September 2014. The consultation was conducted using an online survey, exhibitions, and printed questionnaires. A second online survey was carried out with members of the Cambridge Business Improvement District (CBID) to understand business perceptions in Cambridge of the impact of the proposed options.
- 1.5. The key finding from the consultation was that:

- A clear majority of responses preferred the option to replace the car park with a new underground car park with a mixed residential and/or commercial development above ground.

1.6 Feedback from respondents highlighted a range of opinions, including some views that were not consistent. Some key findings were that :

- Important concerns exist, particularly from some businesses over the potential economic impact to them of a wholesale redevelopment of the site.
- Interim parking arrangements while works are undertaken for both car and cycle users will be a critical factor during any development or refurbishment period.
- The cycle parking facility is highly valued and there is a desire to increase its size.
- There is a desire to at least maintain, and ideally increase, the number of car parking spaces;
- There is also a desire to reduce the number of car park spaces or remove the car park entirely;
- The project offers the opportunity to improve the architecture/visual attractiveness of the area.

1.7 In light of the consultation feedback, a detailed appraisal of the alternative options should now be carried out. The appraisal should recommend an option to members that is consistent with the council's economic, financial environmental and planning objectives, so that the project can be incorporated into the council's future budget.

## **2. Recommendations**

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- 2.1. Note and consider the feedback and analysis from the public and business consultation exercise.
- 2.2. Instruct officers to work up detailed financial evaluation of the options and taking account of the consultation feedback against the objectives set out in this report.
- 2.3. Instruct officers to report back to a future meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee to enable a decision to be made on the preferred option for inclusion in the Council's budget.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 Park Street Multi-Storey Car Park provides 390 parking spaces in total with 282 covered cycle parking spaces at lower ground floor level. There are public toilets at ground floor that are directly accessible from Park Street. The car park dates from the early 1960s. The building is a reinforced concrete construction and built to a design typical of the time. There is a continual and increasing risk of major structural disorder as the structure continues to deteriorate over time. The Council has been provided with estimated costs of £3.5million for required extensive structural repairs to protect the integrity of the steel and concrete structure and to extend the car park's useful life.
- 3.2 Situated in the Historic core of the city centre, Park Street car park is important to the city centre economy and is in a key strategic location to support retail business to the northern side of the city centre. Park Street is the closest and most convenient car park to the restaurants and pubs on Bridge Street, Quayside and Riverside and is used by visitors for shopping, leisure facilities and for other City Centre services. The car park and cycle parking provision is an important facilitator of footfall in the area and public toilets on the ground floor are directly accessible from Park Street.
- 3.3 The car park is an important revenue generator for the Council. It produces the second best revenue per space, after the Grand Arcade car park.
- 3.4 It services the independent retail sector well as it is the most convenient car park for people wishing to visit Bridge St, Magdalene St, St Johns St, Trinity St, Sussex St, Kings St and Sidney St, where many of the independent shops are located. Park St car park is also a popular choice for visitors coming to the city in the evening given its close proximity to the Quayside and Bridge St restaurant area, and to local theatres.
- 3.5 In addition to these stakeholders, the car park has a function to support other important community needs – for instance Bridge Street doctor's surgery.
- 3.6 Park Street is owned and operated by the City Council. The car park is well used, particularly at weekends. The net revenue to the General Fund from the operation of Park Street Car Park in the financial year 2013/14 was 320K.

3.7 In lay terms the car park structure is in a poor state but there is no indication that there is any risk of large-scale collapse. However, there are a number of localised structural issues that needed to be addressed to avoid health and safety risks for persons using the car park.

## 4. Public consultation

4.1 Details of the consultation.

4.1.1 The consultation was carried out between 18 August and 19 September 2014. Consultation was widespread, through these channels:

- About 2,200 leaflets were sent on 14th August 2014 to key stakeholders, local residents, organisations and businesses containing a questionnaire to return by 19 September 2014 using Freepost (see Appendix A);
- Links from the Council website homepage to a Survey Monkey online questionnaire;
- Exhibition stands placed at the Guildhall and the Customer Services Centre, Mandela House;
- Staffed exhibition at Park Street Car Park on 4th, 6th and 17th September;
- Promotion through a press release (picked up and reported by the Cambridge News) and social media (Facebook and Twitter).

4.1.2 The following options were presented for consultation:

**Option 1** Retention of the car park in its current form, subject to a programme of repair and refurbishment and to consider the short-term impact of any refurbishment works on parking supply and demand.

**Option 2** Demolition and reconstruction of an improved multi-storey car park.

**Option 3** Redevelopment of the site for residential, commercial or a mixed-use development to include an underground public car park.

4.1.3 Each development option included the potential for retaining cycle parking and public toilet facilities. The consultation document is included at Appendix A

The survey findings are presented at Appendix B and are summarised below.

## 4.2 Summary of overall findings from public consultation

4.2.1 A total of 817 responses were received. Of these 630 were surveys completed online and 187 were returned leaflets. Therefore there was a 9% return rate for the leaflets.

4.2.2 About 80% of the consultees use Park Street Car Park; of these just under half travel to the car park from inside Cambridge and just over half travel from outside the city.

4.2.3 Most respondents use the car park for leisure/other reasons, followed by shopping and then work/study.

4.2.4 Over half of the consultees preferred Option 3 (new underground car park with development above), about a quarter chose Option 1 (repair current car park) and just under a fifth selected Option 2 (reconstruct multi-storey car park).

4.2.5 When asked which type of development should be built above an underground car park, mixed-use development was the most favoured (55%), followed by residential (26%), then commercial (19%).

4.2.6 A large number of additional comments were received. The most frequently occurring comments include (in order of frequency): the importance of the cycle parking facility and the desire to increase its size; the demand to at least maintain, and ideally increase, the number of car parking spaces; concern regarding alternative arrangements while works are undertaken; a desire to reduce the number of car park spaces or remove the car park entirely; and to take the opportunity to improve the architecture/visual attractiveness of the area.

## 4.3 Comparison of consultation responses by journey origin (i.e. within or outside Cambridge City)

4.3.1 Nearly a third of all the consultees travelling to the car park from within the city expressed a concern regarding cycle parking,

whereas only 12% of those travelling from outside the city commented on provision for cyclists.

- 4.3.2 Significantly more people from within the city were prepared to see a reduction of parking spaces or complete removal of the car park, compared to those from outside the city.
- 4.3.3 A higher percentage of city residents prefer the option to build a new underground car park compared to those from outside the city.
- 4.3.4 Development including residential units was preferred by 8% more city residents than consultees from outside the city, reflecting a desire for more (affordable) housing for residents.

## **5. Business consultation**

5.1 Details of the business consultation.

5.1.1 The consultation was carried out between 30 August and 19 September 2014. Approximately 600 businesses were notified of the survey (via Cambridge BID) and consultation responses were received online using Survey Monkey.

5.1.2 The purpose of the business consultation was to understand mainly how independent local businesses felt about their customers' use of the car park and to understand what businesses perceived to be the economic impact of major works to the car park. An opportunity was provided for suggestions about interim parking arrangements.

The consultation questions are listed at Appendix C.

The survey findings are presented at Appendix D, and are summarised below.

5.2 Summary of findings from business consultation

5.2.1 The total number of businesses who responded was 64

5.2.2 The largest number of business consultees reported that up to (but no more than) a third of their customers use Park Street Car Park.

5.2.3 More businesses thought the length of disruption associated with Options 2 and 3 would have a significant economic impact, and for Option 1 would have a small economic impact.

5.2.4 Due to the location of the car park (in close proximity to their businesses), respondents reported the economic impact as

anything from a marked reduction in businesses, to a large drop in footfall and turnover, up to a forced closure.

5.2.5 Nearly 60% of business respondents cited the identification of alternative parking provision as very important.

5.2.6 Suggestions for alternative parking arrangements include: free park and ride, free on-street parking, on Jesus Green, office car parks (at weekends), Jesus Lane, Colleges and Castle Park with free shuttle bus.

5.2.7 Nearly half of businesses responded that the reduction in spaces in Option 2 would have some impact on trade, and just over a third felt the reduction in spaces in Option 3 would have a major impact on trade.

5.3 General comments from businesses included: the desire for compensation; the request to avoid the significant effect that closing Bridge Street and Jesus Lane had in the past; insufficient car parking already in the city; a car park with even more spaces than proposed should be built; the regeneration of the area having a positive impact; the car park closure depressing the evening economy when P&R doesn't operate.

## **6. Developing the Business Case – Key Objectives**

6.1 In light of the consultation findings, it is recommended that the decision about whether the car park is refurbished, or turned into a new development above and/or below ground should be informed by a more detailed report back to members for a proposed scheme for the future of Park Street car park that focuses on appraising the alternative options from a financial perspective, and is consistent with the following objectives:

- To support the vitality of the city centre both during any construction and after completion of the scheme.
- To deliver a financially viable case that provides good value for money, both as an investment by the city council and in terms of sustaining revenue streams to the council.
- To meet the council's environmental objectives, both in terms of sustainability and design.
- To provide good quality facilities those are accessible and make proper provision for disabled users and for cycle parking.

- To be consistent with local planning guidance

6.2 Further work will be carried out to consider the options and to:

- Review how well the options address the above objectives,
- Review the extent of the structural problems at the car park, in light of the first year's holding repairs
- Consider current information about the condition of the car park and expectations about its continued repair and maintenance, and the costs
- Update information in relation to the property market.
- Identify an indicative timetable for implementing each of the options
- Complete a detailed financial options appraisal so that a preferred option can be recommended and included in the council's Capital Plan.

## 7. Summary and Conclusions

- 7.1 Park Street car park is a valued, well-used resource in a key strategic location in the city centre. It is an important resource for the council, and the car park and cycle park together provide an important source of local footfall for visitors to the city centre colleges, and primarily for leisure and shopping activity in the daytime and the evening,
- 7.2 The car park is over 50 years old, in poor condition and needs substantial and continuing investment to repair and maintain its structure and facilities. A programme of holding repairs is in place to enable a range of alternatives for the future of the car park to be considered.
- 7.3 The public and business consultations to gauge opinion about the best way forward, produced a range of sometimes conflicting opinions, However, a clear preference has emerged from respondents for the car park to be redeveloped as an underground facility, and for the land above ground to become a residential and/or mixed use development that might improve the local landscape.
- 7.4 Key concerns exist about the capacity of the options proposed, the perceived impact of a prolonged redevelopment project on the commercial vitality of those businesses organisations and services



whose customers depend on the car and cycle park, and on the need for alternative parking provision.

- 7.5 The council needs to properly understand the business case for each of the options, and to take account of the consultation feedback in the context of its main objectives for the future of Park Street car park. A detailed financial analysis is required to appraise the options, so that a preferred option can be clearly identified, and a firm recommendation can be made for this project to be included in the council's budget process.

## **8 Implications**

### **(a) Financial Implications**

A financial appraisal of the respective options is recommended to be the subject of a further report.

### **(b) Staffing Implications**

Depending on the preferred option, there may be a requirement for changes to the staffing arrangements to manage both the project development and the operational impact on other car parks.

### **(c) Equal Opportunities Implications**

An Equality Impact Assessment is available.

### **(d) Environmental Implications**

The options under consideration offer the potential in differing degrees to substantially improve the local environment in and around the car park site. Further evaluation of the options can compare the impact of each option on carbon emissions and climate change.

### **(e) Consultation**

This report focuses and reports on the responses to public and business consultations. Further consultation will be required as an integral part of the development of a preferred solution.

### **(f) Community Safety**

This policy is intended to have a neutral impact on Community Safety.

## **9. Background papers**

Appendix A – Public questionnaire

Appendix B – Survey findings

## **10. Inspection of papers**

A full dataset of all responses is available on request. If you have a query on the report please contact:

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