

Executive Report

Report of Head of Economic Development

Author: Chris Mansfield

Tel: 01483 444550

Email: chris.mansfield@guildford.gov.uk

Lead Councillor responsible: James Palmer

Tel: 07919362404

Email: james.palmer@guildford.gov.uk

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Guildford Town Centre Parking Strategic Review

Recommendation to Executive

That the Committee agrees:

- (1) to endorse the retention and development of key car parks listed in section 5 of the Stage 2 report (Appendix 2) in order to support the future sustainable development of the town centre,
- (2) to authorise the Head of Operational Services and Head of Economic Development, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Infrastructure, to implement the strategic objectives and to assess the actions presented in Table 5.1 of the Stage 2 report.
- (3) that recommendations with a financial impact shall be subject to submission and approval of a specific business case and submission of revenue or capital growth bids at the appropriate time in the budget cycle.

Reasons for Recommendation:

To ensure the long term economic prosperity of the Borough and to enhance the sustainable environment of the town centre.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To invite the Executive to consider a strategic review of public parking in Guildford town centre to support the current and future economic growth through managed and sustainable development.

2. Strategic Priorities

- 2.1 The strategic parking review sets out proposals to support a dynamic economy and enhance a sustainable environment.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council owns and controls the majority of publicly used off-street car parks within the town centre. These car parks provide vital access to the town and its businesses. We use our car parks and particularly the charges to influence parking in the town centre to support businesses and reduce congestion. Our car parks create a net income estimated to be £5.7 million in 2013-14 (excluding capital charges).
- 3.2 It is important to determine the right level of parking to support future development and to understand the potential impact on parking capacity and distribution of developing existing town centre car parks such as Bright Hill, Mary Road, and Guildford Park. A number of these sites have competing demands and opportunities for future use that need to be reconciled with the need to sustain effective vehicular and pedestrian access to the town centre.
- 3.3 To assist our understanding of these strategic issues, a specialist transport consultancy, Steer Davies Gleave (SDG) has carried out a review of off-street parking supply in Guildford.
- 3.4 The proposed objectives of the review are that car parking:
- is managed in a manner consistent with overall transport and economic development objectives
 - is maintained to the level required to support economic growth
 - in central Guildford is prioritised for short-term users with long term users being encouraged to park in more peripheral areas
 - is managed and maintained by the Council
 - tariffs, signing and management are clear to the user
 - usage is actively monitored and reported on.

4. Consultants' Findings

- 4.1 The brief issued to SDG required them to look at the issue in two stages. Stage 1 required them to look at the factors affecting the need for parking and determine the quantity of parking required to support anticipated growth. Stage 2 asked how we could provide the required level of parking.
- 4.2 When considering a scenario where all known development takes place, the consultant assesses the impact of 60,000 square metres of retail space on the town centre. This is the maximum unmet floorspace identified by the Roger Tym 2011 Retail and Leisure Study. It includes 45,000 square metres of floorspace covered by the North Street area.
- 4.3 The study takes account of the emerging transport studies and the impact of existing and new park and ride facilities. The impact of these measures is vital to the long term efficient and sustainable functioning of the town centre.
- 4.4 The Stage 1 report is included as **Appendix 1**. The study concluded that under most development scenarios, the existing parking supply would be able to absorb much of the growth in demand. They based this on increasing parking occupancy above the target of 85 per cent. The consequence of this is a

reduction in the ability of the parking supply to absorb fluctuations in demand, for example, Christmas shopping parking.

- 4.5 If all envisaged developments excluding the North Street site are built with the maximum parking permitted in accordance with planning policy parking standards and assuming target occupancy of 85 per cent during normal times, there is a shortfall of 300 to 400 short-stay spaces on Saturdays. If all the developments including the North Street site are built in accordance with the maximum permitted parking standards then the consultants estimate a shortfall on a Saturday of 400 to 500 short-stay spaces. The consultants highlight these findings in paragraph 6.6 of the Stage 1 report and develop them in paragraph 2.12 of the Stage 2 report.
- 4.6 The Stage 2 report is included as **Appendix 2**. The report recommends a short-stay zone (paragraph 3.13) to maximise access to retail areas. The study also assesses the location of the car parks, major areas of activity and traffic flows to recommend the best sites for future provision of car parking space to support economic growth (paragraphs 3.20 to 3.27). It should be noted that the provision of car parking could limit the scope for other uses of land such as Bright Hill, which is currently allocated for housing and car parking.
- 4.7 Furthermore, the study proposes looking at encouraging short-stay users to use car parks, currently designated for long-stay use. In all development scenarios, there is a surplus of long-stay car parking at Saturday peak periods. Taking the short and long-stay parking supply together, there is sufficient capacity to provide parking for forecasted demand. However, this would require between 10 to 15 per cent of potential short-stay users switching to car parks that we currently designate for long-stay use because of their distance from the town centre.
- 4.8 The consultants raise the potential for redistribution of users in paragraph 4.9 (of Appendix 2). The consultants then highlight ways in which this redistribution could be encouraged and suggest other approaches to help manage demand. These are:
- managing peaks in demand – the report suggests promotions and offers to encourage use of other forms of transport and highlight less well utilised car parks (paragraphs 4.11 to 4.13)
 - improvements in signage and way finding – the report details a number of areas where signing can be improved (paragraphs 4.14 to 4.22)
 - improving the quality of parking and the urban realm – the report makes a number of proposals including making better pedestrian links between car parks and the retail centre (paragraphs 4.23 to 4.30)
 - modifications to parking pricing – the report suggests increasing the cost of short-stay parking after three hours to encourage those parking longer to use long-stay car parks or to cap the charge at long-stay car parks on a Saturday at three or four hours worth of parking (paragraphs 4.31 to 4.34)
 - improvements to sustainable transport measures – the report highlights the development of park and ride, bus improvements and improvements to cycling and walking.

5. Customer and Community Scrutiny Committee - 10 September 2013

- 5.1 The Committee raised concerns about the scope of the study, the role of other transport measures, in particular Park & Ride, the impact on contract parking and parking for businesses, on-street parking and the tariff structure. The review accepts the need to balance the drive for economic prosperity and growth with the protection of the environment.
- 5.2 The existing parking strategy recommends a reduction in long stay parking in the town centre as park and ride develops. The review did not directly consider contract parking but the current supply is relatively small at around 400 spaces. Contract parking, where each space is sold to a particular user, is an inefficient use of space and the use of season tickets in the larger long stay car parks is preferred.
- 5.3 The review took into account the amount of on street parking space currently available for short stay visitors but did not make recommendations about the number of spaces required because the supply is relatively fixed. The ability to increase supply to match demand primarily concerns the provision of off street parking.
- 5.4 The Committee queried the scope of the brief, including why the preferences and views of businesses had not been sought, and whether the report had underestimated development in the town. In response, the Committee was advised that it was recognised that businesses had not been consulted, the scope had been prioritised to not include park and ride and on-street parking, and that other parallel studies would examine the requirements of businesses.
- 5.5 Further comments related to the scope of the study excluding the assessment of parking demand during the evenings and off peak periods. As the capacity for parking will not be exceeded at any point during these periods, it is not necessary to analyse the detailed operational and enforcement arrangements as part of this study. The car parking Business Plan will consider these issues, reporting to the Executive later this year.
- 5.6 Members of the Committee also raised concern that a three-storey development on Millbrook would block views of the river and instead referred to a two-storey scheme proposed by the Guildford Society. The Committee also asked whether existing riverside car parks could be relocated to make the land available for other uses. This was not part of the study.
- 5.7 The consultants made proposals about how any shortfall in parking needs is met and the options can be considered in more detail as development proposals emerge. The Committee also commented about the parking standards applied to new development. The study has not examined the potential changes to standards, which are reviewed by Surrey County Council and through the emerging Local Plan.

6. Summary of Options

- 6.1 The consultants' reports provide a flexible framework for addressing parking issues as development progress. Drawing upon the findings of the review, further investigation of these options will come forward in tandem with the formulation of the scheme for the North Street site and other infrastructure improvements for the town centre.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 Table 5.2 of the Stage 2 report outlines the consultants' estimate of capital costs and operating costs of the proposed actions. This excludes the cost of any new or replacement car parks that we may decide to build.
- 7.2 Officers will bring forward capital or revenue growth bids for any additional budget requirements identified because of these recommendations. The consultant has estimated costs against each action but some could be absorbed into the parking services work. An indication of what work could be absorbed into existing work patterns is presented in **Appendix 3**. We will address this issue in more detail in the Parking Business Plan, which we will bring to the committee at its meeting on 21 November 2013, if the Executive agrees the principles set out in the reports.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 The Council is not under a statutory duty to provide off-street parking but car parks have an important role in providing access to the town, sustaining the local economy and controlling congestion. Our parking strategy needs to help support and complement other strategies for developing the town. Proposals to develop car parking in the town will need to be subject to planning applications and detailed assessment of the traffic impact.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 The proposals put forward by the consultant provide an assessment of the amount of parking needed to support different development scenarios, provides guidance on the best location for further parking and suggests ways of optimising the use of existing parking. The recommendations provide flexibility so if proposals for developing the town change the response can be adapted.

10. Background Papers

[Guildford Town Centre Development Study 2010](#)
[Guildford Borough Economic Strategy 2013-2031](#)

11. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Stage 1 report from Steer Davies Gleave
Appendix 2 – Stage 2 report from Steer Davies Gleave
Appendix 3 – Summary of financial implications