

BUCKHURST 2 CAR PARK PROPOSAL – PROJECT UPDATE & CONSULTATION RESULTS

Cabinet – 17 July 2014

Report of Chief Officer Environmental & Operational Services

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: At their meeting of 6 March Cabinet considered a report entitled Sevenoaks Town Centre Parking Review which provided Members with an evaluation of parking demand within Sevenoaks Town and set out a proposal to provide additional car parking capacity by installing decking at the existing Buckhurst 2 car park.

Cabinet resolved that “a planning application be submitted to provide an additional 300 car park spaces on the existing Buckhurst 2 car park by providing a two storey elevated car deck”.

To assist the Council in preparing its planning application a public consultation was carried out between 5 June and 26 June to find out the public’s views on the proposed additional parking.

A questionnaire was available online and from Sevenoaks Leisure Centre throughout the period, which received 278 responses. More than 250 people attended public consultation exhibitions held between 5 and 7 June and 16 letters were also received during the consultation period.

The report provides Members with an update on progress made in taking forward the resolution of Cabinet at their meeting on 6 March and sets out for Members consideration the results of the public consultation.

This report supports the Council Promise to support and develop the local economy.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Roddy Hogarth

Contact Officer(s) Richard Wilson, Ext. 7067
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Recommendations to Cabinet:

- (a) Note the progress made in seeking to deliver additional car parking capacity at Buckhurst 2 car park in Sevenoaks Town;
 - (b) Consider the views gathered through the consultation and provide guidance to Officers on any matters that should be incorporated in a future planning application; and
 - (c) Consider and comment on the Equality Impacts set out at Appendix D to this report.
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Reason for recommendations: To ensure that the opinions of the public are taken in to account, in so far as possible, in the design of the proposed additional car parking provision at Buckhurst 2 car park in Sevenoaks Town.

Introduction and Background

- 1 An independent study has demonstrated that there is insufficient long stay parking in Sevenoaks town. This is due to a number of factors including the recent loss of both private and public long stay spaces, the rise in the number of residential properties in the town centre and business growth.
- 2 At their meeting of 6 March Cabinet considered a report entitled Sevenoaks Town Centre Parking Review which provided Members with an evaluation of parking demand within Sevenoaks Town and included a proposal to provide additional car parking capacity by installing decking at the existing Buckhurst 2 car park.
- 3 Cabinet resolved that “a planning application be submitted to provide an additional 300 car park spaces on the existing Buckhurst 2 car park by providing a two storey elevated car deck”.
- 4 Since that time Portfolio Holders and Officers have been working to implement the Cabinet resolution and this report provides an update on progress made and summarises the results of a consultation which has provided local residents and businesses an opportunity to view initial plans and provide their views on the proposed two story elevated car deck designs prior to planning application stage.

Project Update

- 5 Since the Cabinet resolution in March Officers have been working with a Project Manager to take forward the Buckhurst 2 decked car park proposal. To date architects, consultant engineers and planning consultants have been engaged to prepare for submitting a planning application. This preparation has included commissioning a range of studies and surveys including those for transport, environment, heritage, arboriculture, ecology and a statement of community engagement.
- 6 It is anticipated that a planning application will be submitted in August. The Council’s planning consultants have been requested to take into account, wherever possible, the views gathered from the public consultation which is set out in this report.
- 7 Subject to planning consent, construction works could commence on site in January 2015. The completion date is targeted for April 2015. Officers are currently exploring a range of options to ensure that adequate temporary parking is available throughout the construction period.

Public Consultation

- 8 A public consultation was conducted between 5 June and 26 June to find out the public’s views on the proposed additional parking at Buckhurst 2 car park in

Sevenoaks Town. During this time local residents, businesses, workers and visitors could:

- View artists impressions and drawings and complete an online copy of the consultation survey from the Council's website;
- View artists and impressions of the proposed car park at the Sevenoaks Leisure Centre, together with an opportunity to complete a paper copy of the consultation survey; or
- Attend a series of public exhibitions which took place between 5 and 7 June.

9 To raise awareness of the consultation exercise, the following measures were taken:

- Approximately 1,200 letters and flyers giving information about how to give views and the public exhibition dates were sent to residents and businesses in a wide area around the Buckhurst 2 car park.
- The home page of the Council website promoted the consultation throughout the period and provided a direct link to supporting information and the online questionnaire.
- Local media organisations provided coverage of Council press releases.
- Social media posts from the Council's Twitter accounts and Facebook pages provided links to the consultation page on the Council website and encouraged people to give their views.
- The web address for the online questionnaire was publicised on all written documentation, including posters in all Sevenoaks District Council car parks, and posters distributed to businesses in Sevenoaks Town.
- Real Business, the Council's Email bulletin to local businesses featured the car park consultation in its June edition.

Consultation Responses

- 10 Appendix A provides a copy of the questionnaire that was available online, at the public consultation events and at Sevenoaks Leisure Centre.
- 11 A total of 278 responses to the Council's questionnaire were received. The results of which are provided at Appendix B to this report and summarised from paragraph 13 of this report.
- 12 Appendix C to this report provides a comprehensive review of the public exhibition events and the comments provided from those that attended. Appendix C also summarises feedback from letters and Emails received during the consultation period. More than 250 people attended the public exhibitions, providing more than 140 comments and a total of 16 letters and Emails were received.

Summary of Results

13 Set out below is a summary of the headline results from the 278 responses to the Buckhurst 2 consultation questionnaire. Members should note that full detail of these results is provided at Appendix B to this report.

14 Experience of parking

- 63% of respondents usually travel to Sevenoaks town centre by car
- 82% of respondents use the car parks in Sevenoaks town. 48% of respondents use the car parks at least once a week, with Saturday being the most popular day (76%)
- The main reasons given for visiting Sevenoaks town were shopping (70%), recreation (53%) and work (31%).
- 52% of respondents normally use short stay car parking. Long stay car parks are used by 17% of respondents.

15 Car Park proposal

- 35% of respondents said they find it either difficult or very difficult to park in Sevenoaks town.
- 65% of respondents agree that more parking spaces are needed in Sevenoaks town centre
- 57% of respondents said that extra long stay parking was needed. The same proportion said that extra short term spaces were required.
- 26% of people would be prepared to pay more for a reserved space.

16 Finish & Cladding

- 92% of respondents agreed that the new car park should be clad with materials that help it to fit in with its surroundings.
- 39% of people said that red brick cladding should be used on the side facing the leisure centre with the remaining cladding being in cedar.
- Respondents were offered the opportunity to suggest alternative forms of cladding. The most popular suggestion was for a living wall (17 responses). 24 respondents used the comments box for this question to say they do not want the new car park.

17 Landscaping

- Protecting existing trees and greenery and seeking to plant more trees to reduce visual impact were supported by 99% and 92% of respondents respectively.

- Respondents were offered the opportunity to provide their own comments on the landscaping around the car park site. The most popular suggestions were for a living wall (10 responses) and lots of planting (10 responses). 11 respondents used the comments box for this question to say they do not want the new car park.

18 **Other comments**

- The final question relating to the car park within the survey provided an open text space for respondent's suggestions and comments. 151 of the 278 respondents provided additional comments, with the most popular comments summarised as:
 - Do not want the car park (32 responses)
 - Car park spaces should be wider than normal (31 responses)
 - Concerns about impact of traffic (19 responses)

Supporting the Local Economy

19 In taking forward plans to increase car parking capacity in Sevenoaks town Members have expressed, amongst other things, a desire to support local workers and businesses which have highlighted their concerns on the need for adequate parking provision for their staff.

20 A summary of the headline results from those respondents that stated their main reasons for visiting Sevenoaks is for work or for business is set out below. The percentages in brackets are the results of all respondents for comparison.

- 47.4% live outside of Sevenoaks District (19.6%)
- 80.8% usually travel to Sevenoaks town by car (63.5%)
- 41.3% Sevenoaks town every day (20.9%)
- 39.5% usually use long stay car parking (17.1%)
- 51.1% say finding a parking space is difficult (34.7%)
- 81.4% say more parking is needed (65.5%)
- 76.8% believe that more long stay parking is needed (56.8%)

Concerns and Issues arising

21 Throughout the questionnaire and during the public exhibition events respondents were able to provide open text comments to provide comments and suggestions. Details on the number of responses on each issue are provided in the Appendices. In summary form the main concerns and issues raised by respondents are as follows.

- i. Do not want the car park
 - ii. Traffic concerns
 - iii. Do not like the design
 - iv. Impact on neighbours including Knole Park
 - v. Consider other solutions e.g. another location, park and ride, improving / promoting other forms of transport
- 22 As highlighted at paragraph 5 of this report Members may wish to note that in preparing to submit a planning application as resolved at the Cabinet meeting in March, Officers have instructed a number of studies which will be required at planning application stage. This includes those for transport, environment, heritage, arboriculture, ecology and a statement of community engagement.
- 23 The results of these studies will be considered alongside the outcomes of this consultation and the guidance of Members resulting from this report before a planning application is submitted. All of these sources of information will inform the final design of the car park which will be submitted within the planning application.

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

- 24 None. This report reports back on the results of the public consultation on the Buckhurst 2 car park proposal and it is appropriate that the results are reported to Members for their consideration.

Key Implications

25 Financial

There are no financial impacts arising from the consideration of the consultation results.

26 Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

There are no legal implications arising from the consideration of the consultation results.

Undertaking and public consultation and responding in an appropriate manner to the results is supportive of reducing the risk of a planning application being submitted that is not in keeping with public opinion.

27 Equality Impacts

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:		
Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to disadvantage or discriminate against different	No	In carrying out the public consultation data was gathered and assessed in relation to protected characteristics. These related to age, disability, ethnicity and gender.

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:		
Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
groups in the community?		A full profile of the respondents the accompanying analysis and conclusions is provided as Appendix D to this report.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have the potential to promote equality of opportunity?	Yes	
c. What steps can be taken to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		Recommendations for action that could be taken to mitigate or reduce the impacts identified are set out at Appendix D to this report.

Conclusions

- 28 This report sets out the outcomes of the public consultation on the proposal to provide additional parking capacity at the site of Buckhurst 2 car park in Sevenoaks.
- 29 Of the 278 responses received to the Council's survey 65% of respondents agree that more parking spaces are required in the town, with 57% of respondents in support of more long stay and short stay parking. When considering the design and landscaping 92% of respondents said that the car park should fit in with its surroundings and would advise additional planting.
- 30 The consultation has identified areas where the decision being considered has the potential to promote equality of opportunity.
- 31 The consultation highlighted a number of areas where the public have concerns, ranging from people saying they do not want the proposed car park, to comments on considering a different location or design and concerns about the traffic levels that may be generated.
- 32 Members are requested to consider the outcome of the public consultation and provide guidance to Officers on any matters that should be considered in developing a future planning application for the expansion of parking capacity at Buckhurst 2 car park.

Appendices

- Appendix A – Consultation questionnaire
- Appendix B – Consultation survey results
- Appendix C – Public exhibition results
- Appendix D – Equality Impacts

Background Papers: None

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