

Summary of public exhibition results and feedback arising from letter and email correspondence



Executive Summary

The Consultation

Sevenoaks District Council conducted a public consultation 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:

- Residents could view artists' impressions and drawings and comment using an online survey on the Council's website
- Residents could attend a series of public exhibitions in place between 5 and 7 June
- In addition, from Monday 9 June to Thursday 26 June, the concept drawings of the proposed car park were on display at the Sevenoaks Leisure Centre, together with an opportunity to complete a paper copy of the consultation survey.

This report summarises the results of the public exhibition results and highlights the feedback arising from letter and email correspondence during the consultation period.

Response

More than 250 people attended the public consultation exhibitions and 16 letters or emails were received. A further 278 responses were gathered from the formal questionnaire.

Summary of findings

The key themes that have come through the public exhibition stage of the consultation are set out below. It should be noted that the majority of people who attended the public exhibitions identified themselves as residents rather than people who worked in Sevenoaks Town.

• Landscaping

- Of the 29 people who commented about landscaping 20 wanted to maintain the current level of landscaping and tree screening.
- 5 people wanted to see some form of 'living wall' featuring as part of the design and to soften cladding.

• Cladding

- People were generally supportive of the materials proposed. 5 of the 12 people who commented about cladding wished to see a brick cladding finish, with 4 people wishing to see some form of 'living wall'.

• Traffic

- Of the 17 people who commented about traffic issues 12 were concerned about congestion and traffic management that related to the Suffolk Way junction.

• Other comments

Of the 85 responses within this category:

- 16 people raised issues over the design of the car park.
- 10 people felt that the Council should seek alternative solutions to the car park, for example park and ride.
- 10 people expressed community safety related issues and concerns
- 7 people expressed a desire to see the car park levelled to lower the height of the car park.

Letter and emails

- The key themes arising in the letters from members of the public were in line with those raised in the public exhibition:
 - Concerns expressed by residents of surrounding properties and their representatives.
 - Comments made relating to design, construction and planning issues.
 - Concerns relating to increase traffic and congestion with particular reference to the Suffolk Way junction.

Public Exhibitions

Three public exhibitions were arranged, designed and hosted by the Council's Communities and Business team and to encourage as many people as possible to give their views about the proposed additional parking at the Buckhurst 2 car park.

The locations and times of the exhibitions were designed to enable the widest possible attendance by people who live, work and travel to Sevenoaks town.

Members of the public were able to attend a series of public exhibitions which took place as follows:

- Thursday 5 June from 10am – 9pm at the Sevenoaks Leisure Centre
- Friday 6 June from 10am – 7pm at the District Council Offices
- Saturday 7 June from 10am – 3pm at Bligh's Meadow, near to Marks and Spencer

In addition, from Monday 9 June to Thursday 26 June, the concept drawings of the proposed car park were on display at the Sevenoaks Leisure Centre together with an opportunity to complete a paper copy of the consultation survey.

Consultation responses were accepted up to Monday 30 June to ensure that any postal responses were included.

All contributions received by the Council have been included in this analysis.

How people expressed their views

The public were able to take part in person by visiting one of the staffed public exhibitions, or in their own time, returning contributions by post, internet or by visiting the unstaffed display set up in the Sevenoaks Leisure Centre from 9 to 26 June.

All participants were invited to complete a questionnaire and contribute additional comments, ideas and suggestions.

People who attended the public exhibitions stopped by to collect paper copies of the consultation survey for themselves, friends and family to complete at home and return to the Council.

Paper copies of the consultation questionnaires were distributed to staff who worked in the Sevenoaks Town during the public exhibition days. This was to enable staff that could not leave busy businesses to complete the survey and return it in their own time.



Visitors to the Public Exhibition were invited to contribute their ideas on 'post it' notes and stick them on the boards for everyone to see, creating an instant dialogue for sharing views on the proposed additional parking on the site of the Buckhurst 2 car park, Sevenoaks. The concept drawings available were as follows:

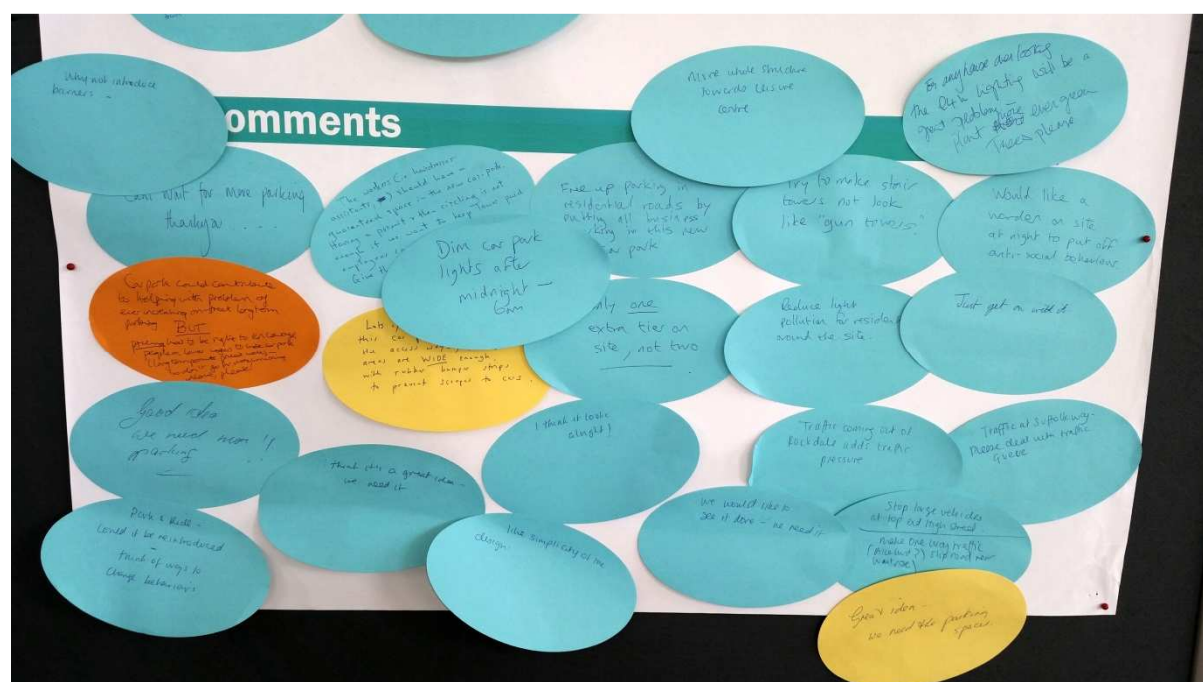
- Existing location and views
- Proposed plans and sections
- Proposed design views
- Proposed materials
- Current landscape
- Landscape precedents

Members of the public had an opportunity to use a 'post it' note to comment on any aspect of the proposals for additional parking at the site of the Buckhurst 2 car park and stick them within the following broad sections:

- Cladding
- Landscaping
- Other

In addition, members of the public were able to take away a paper copy of the survey and return it using a pre-paid envelope or return it to a secure drop box area at the Sevenoaks Leisure Centre between 9 and 26 June.

Analysis of comments received during the Public Exhibition



The post it notes were used spontaneously by the public. In addition, members of staff were on hand to transcribe people's views. Below is a summary of issues raised.

Summary of Comments at Public Exhibition events

Landscaping – 29 comments made

- Maintain existing trees/screening – don't cut down any trees (20 comments)
- Living walls to soften car park (5 comments)
- Soften impact of Knole Park elevation (3 comments)
- Use permeable surfaces to prevent flooding (1 comment)

Cladding – 12 comments made

- In favour of brick cladding (5 comments)
- In favour of living walls (4 comments)
- In favour of cedar cladding (2 comments)
- Prefer using birch to clad car park (1 comment)

Traffic – 17 comments made

- Issues over timing of Suffolk Way traffic lights (12 comments)
- Additional pollution from car fumes (2 comments)
- Alternative solutions for traffic management suggested (One way Akehurst Lane, use of Bus Station to exit) (2 comments)
- Additional traffic noise (1 comment)

Other – 85 comments made

- Issues over the design of the car park (16 comments)
- In support of the project (13 comments)
- Alternatives solutions to the car park should be sought (10 comments)
- Community safety issues (e.g. anti-social behaviour) (10 comments)
- Site should be levelled to reduce height of car park (7 comments)
- Move car park to another site (6 comments)
- Cost of car parking is too expensive/don't raise price (6 comments)
- Local residents' parking issues around Buckhurst 2 (5 comments)
- Impact of additional traffic in town (4 comments)
- Light spill from car park will impact residents (3 comments)
- Make sure car park is properly lit (2 comments)
- Access issues for people with disabilities (2 comments)
- Impact of the development on local residents (2 comments)
- Impact of construction of car park on adjacent properties (1 comment)
- Does the car park need to be operational 24 hours? (1 comment)

Analysis of Comments received by letter and email

A total of 16 letters was received during the consultation period. The views expressed are summarised below.

In Support of Proposal

- In support of additional parking in the town - 5 comments

Impact on Adjacent Properties

- Car park will increase pollution - 4 comments
- Car park will be intrusive in views from Knole Park - 4 comments
- Car park will result in loss of light for adjacent properties - 3 comments
- Light spill from car park will affect adjacent properties - 3 comments
- Car park will impact residents of Akehurst Lane - 3 comments
- Car park affects privacy of adjacent properties - 2 comments
- Car park will affect resale values of adjacent properties - 2 comments
- Noise from a steel structure will affect adjacent properties - 2 comments
- Car park will impact on Buckhurst Avenue residents - 2 comments
- Development will lead to loss of view for adjacent properties - 1 comment
- Car park will be detrimental to different groups in the community - 1 comment
- Car park will impact on residents of Buckhurst Lane - 1 comment

Design, Construction & Planning Issues

- Size and scale of car park is detrimental to the town - 5 comments
- Car park is of poor design - 3 comments
- There is no natural light into proposed car park - 2 comments
- Car park should be levelled to reduce height of car park - 2 comments
- Proposed structure will deteriorate quickly - 2 comments
- Clad south wall in white to reflect light - 1 comment

- Car park needs an Environmental Assessment - 1 comment
- Car park needs a Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment - 1 comment
- Car park needs an Heritage Assessment - 1 comment
- Full range of mitigations to impact need considering - 1 comment
- Proposal takes no account of land levels - 1 comment
- Need to consider Kent Design Standards - 1 comment
- Car park should have living walls - 1 comment
- There will be a serious effect to parking during construction - 1 comment
- Recent planning applications agreed have reduced parking provision in the town - 1 comment
- Information about wider choice of claddings available should be provided - 1 comment
- Information on how architects, consulting engineer have been appointed should be provided - 1 comment

Community Safety

- Community safety issues raised re anti-social behaviour - 6 comments

Traffic & Congestion

- Car park will exacerbate congestion at Suffolk Way traffic lights - 7 comments
- Over-development of Sevenoaks is overheating car parks - 1 comment
- Need to retain parking permits for school parents - 1 comment
- Road layout Akehurst Lane/bus station be altered to relieve congestion - 1 comment

Alternatives

- Park and ride scheme should be considered instead - 4 comments
- Alternatives sites in the town should be sought - 3 comments
- Bus services should be improved instead - 1 comment
- Car sharing schemes should be considered instead - 1 comment
- Car park should be sited nearer leisure centre - 1 comment

Screening

- Existing trees/screening should be retained - 2 comments
- Deciduous trees will be bare in winter and will not screen car park - 2 comments

Other

- Does the car park really need to be open 24 hours - 2 comments
- Project is being rushed - 2 comments
- A secure gate is needed between the car park and Akehurst Lane - 1 comment
- Consultation is only on look of car park; cannot dissent to project - 1 comment
- Lack of joined up thinking with Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan - 1 comment
- No DDA compliance - 1 comment
- No prior consultation with residents - 1 comment
- Scope of feasibility study excluded Waitrose car park and disabled spaces - 1 comment