

Executive Report

Ward(s) affected: Onslow and Holy Trinity

Report of Director of Services

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Parking Study and Impact on Guildford Park Road and Bright Hill Car Parks

Executive Summary

The Council is in the process of developing Guildford Park Car Park (GPCP) for housing and replacement parking and is considering developing Bright Hill Car Park (BHCP) for housing with potential parking re-provision.

Since the original decision to develop these sites a number of factors around cost and demand for housing and parking had changed and it was felt prudent to undertake an in-depth parking study to inform the Council on whether the existing plans are still appropriate given the changes in circumstances. This study has informed the immediate decisions for these car parks and helps the Council develop a medium to long term strategy around car park provision.

The report sets out the background, the key information from the Parking Study and the recommendations as a result of this.

Recommendation to Executive

That the Executive approves the following:

1. With regard to Guildford Park Car Park, to cease the development of the car park and authorise officers to seek planning permission for a purely residential scheme on the site.
2. With regard to Bright Hill Car Park, to authorise the Waste, Parking and Fleet Services Manager in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Environment to agree the provision of public parking based purely on a standalone business case with a maximum payback period for any additional investment of 10 years.
3. Authorise the Waste, Parking and Fleet Services Manager to develop medium and long-term strategies and actions plans based on the Parking Study within the Parking

Annual Business Plan for formal adoption by the Executive.

Reason(s) for Recommendation:

To finalise the position for GPCP in relation to the provision of the car park and housing, set clear assessment criteria for parking at BHCP and to authorise officers to develop a medium to long term parking strategy based on the findings of the study.

Is the report (or part of it) exempt from publication? No

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To set out the recommendations for moving forward with Guildford Park Car Park (GPCP) and Bright Hill Car Park (BHCP).
- 1.2 To set out the next steps for the strategic framework and principles underpinning the provision of car parking in Guildford, based upon the Parking Study undertaken in 2019/20.

2. Strategic Priorities

- 2.1 The provision of parking and housing support two key priorities of the Council
 - Economy and Regeneration, particularly supporting a vibrant, healthy town centre
 - Housing And community, particularly ensuring residents having access to a quality home that meets their needs at a price they can afford
- 2.2 A choice of Parking or Housing on our assets can lead to a conflict between these strategic themes and priorities, therefore there is a need to carefully balance the use of our assets to ensure the council does not meet one priority at the cost of another.

3. Background

- 3.1 We operate over 5000 car park spaces in the town that support and enable a wide range of activity in the borough. The future demand for parking is uncertain with:
 - a challenging retail environment
 - a climate emergency with actions looking to encourage modal shift
 - expected property growth with resulting growth in demand for access
 - continued significant congestion and efforts to reduce this.
 - longer term changes in technology such as autonomous vehicles
- 3.2 We have been faced with and in the future will face difficult choices over what parking we need and where we need it and recognise that many of our parking facilities are located in areas that could have mixed use or alternative exclusive uses, for example housing.

- 3.3 In particular, GPCP and BHCP have been subject to imminent plans for development.
- 3.4 There is a need to make an urgent and clear decision on what development and parking provision is provided at these two sites. In addition, there is a need to update and confirm the strategic principles underpinning our short, medium and long-term parking strategy and agree a series of actions and business plans aligned to these principles.
- 3.5 To help us come to a view we commissioned a consultant, Systra to undertake a detailed Parking Study and produce a Baselining and a Strategy report. These are at **Appendices 1 and 2**. This work was undertaken through late 2019 and early 2020.

Guildford Park Car Park

- 3.6 This car park is a large 400 space surface car park. It has already been approved for a mixed used site including giving over significant ground space for housing and re-provision of car parking on a smaller footprint within the current car park via a Multi Storey Car Park. Enabling works over the past two years have effectively halved the operating capacity of this car park, with displacement to other facilities such as Farnham Road.
- 3.7 The overall construction budget (excluding enabling and fees) for the car park was £9m. However there are concerns associated with achieving the targeted capital receipts for the residential part of the development and the costs of the car park construction are projected to exceed £11.5m.
- 3.8 This combination of increased costs and reduce capital returns resulting in increased borrowing is challenging for the business case and at the same time there is pressure to make best use of existing brownfield sites to help meet ongoing housing needs and avoid the need for green belt release.
- 3.9 As a result the Parking Study was specifically asked to consider if the re-provision of spaces at GPCP was absolutely necessary. The advice from the study is that demand from this car park can be met from other car parks and other facilities such as park and ride (Onslow).
- 3.10 The site has seen enabling works of approximately £5m, approximately £675,000 of these would be linked to the car park works which will be abortive costs if the decision is taken not to proceed.

Bright Hill Car Park

- 3.11 This is a smaller surface car park with 113 spaces. It is built into a slope and has several tiers. There are barriers protecting the edges of the tiers and several of these have degraded and have been assessed as at risk of failure. The site is earmarked for development and the costs of repair are high. As these costs would be abortive

costs in the event of a development, we have closed around a third of the car park for safety reasons, rather than spend significant sums on barrier repairs. This has displaced potential users to other car parks, which we also own, so the global impact has been minimal.

3.12 As with GPCP we wanted to be clear if reprovision at this site was critical to the overall strategic provision of parking spaces. The clear advice is that loss of parking here would not have a significant overall impact on parking provision now or in the future.

3.13 However it may still be in the councils commercial interest to re-provide parking here. In short if public provision can provide a business case that results in a pay back of 10 years or less then it is worth doing. In the event there is no payback, or the period is longer than 10 years, then the longer-term uncertainty over future technology and associated customer behaviours would lead us to a more risk averse position and a focus on the housing provision in isolation.

Conversion of the Study into a Strategy

3.14 In addition to providing a clear and early position and advice on GPCP and BHCP, the study is also intended to inform our medium and long term parking strategy, which, of course, needs to align with the objectives of the local plan and emerging climate change, town centre and transport plans.

3.15 The Study has numerous recommendations, some we already do, or are planning to do, some we need to consider and build into future business plans and action plans.

3.16 Based on the initial baselining report and study, we believe the following high level principles/recommendations should be adopted:

1. Remain open and supportive to better use of other surface car parks, but with re-provision of appropriately located parking space (right space, right place) as a prerequisite
2. Maintain investment in our car park assets
3. Support the officer team to monitor and engage with industry and innovation to maintain expertise and knowledge of transport/parking trends and modal shift, especially Autonomous Vehicles (AVs) and smart parking tech to allow us to plan for change
4. Review strategic provision every three years
5. Continue to support and invest in modal shift (trains, buses and P&R) – this will help growth without significantly threatening our assets and revenues
6. Continue to and increase support for less polluting vehicles (EV and Hydrogen)

3.20 Whilst providing a high-level framework in the light of the Study, there remains a significant amount of work to assess and develop an action plan associated with the detailed recommendations.

4. Key Risks

- 4.1 Ceasing the car park at Guildford Park instead, providing further housing would result in a requirement to seek a new planning consent for this part of the site. Planning consent is not guaranteed.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 Guildford Park CP

The current budget for the general fund element of the entire scheme is £6.5m on the approved capital programme and £23.1m on the provisional capital programme. If Councillors decide not to proceed with the MSCP, the Council's underlying need to borrow will reduce by £8.5m, which will, in turn, reduce the borrowing costs projected in the general fund revenue budget, and will reduce the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision cost. Any abortive costs can be accounted for in the 2019/20 outturn.

5.2 Bright Hill CP

There is £13.5m on the provisional General Fund capital programme for the development of the scheme as a whole. If the scheme is entirely housing this funding is likely to come from the HRA account and not from the General Fund account thereby lowering the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision cost in future years.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 With respect to the first recommendation in the report, if the Council decides to cease the development of GPCP park, legal advice should be obtained on both the legal and financial implications that are likely to arise from (a) the Council ceasing the development and terminating contracts with consultants and / or contractors as well as upon steps that can be taken to mitigate those risks and costs (including consideration as to whether the consultants or others have complied with their contractual duties and/ or the possibility of novating the contracts).
- 6.2 In the event that the recommendations shall entail the appointment of consultants, then officers should obtain express authority to do so as well as legal advice on (a) the procurement process and (b) the terms of appointment of consultants.

7. Human Resource Implications

- 7.1 There are no Human Resources implications arising from this report.

8. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 8.1 This duty has been considered in the context of this report and it has been concluded that there are no equality and diversity implications arising directly from this report.

9. Climate Change/Sustainability Implications

- 9.1 The council is committed to reducing emissions, particularly from vehicles. The balanced provision of parking along with the promotion of other methods looks to balance the need to support a vibrant, healthy town centre by enabling access whilst encouraging use of other facilities such as Park and Ride.

10. Summary of Options

- 10.1 GPCP alternative options include continuing with parking or reducing the parking provision to bring down the build costs.
- 10.2 BHCP alternative options include doing nothing, repairing the current car park and retaining the car park as is.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 The parking study is an in depth look at our data, our expected changes over the coming years, our customers preferences and behaviours and brings in wider industry knowledge of parking and the future of parking.
- 11.2 This enables us to critically assess the need for reprovision of current development sites at car parks and concludes that for GPCP and BHCP there is no strategic need to re-provide.
- 11.3 Going forward the picture is less clear and a long-term balanced strategy taking into account a number of local, national and technological factors is needed. The reports allow officers to build a coherent and integrated strategy for the continued provision of parking and its role in enabling a healthy town centre and supporting change to more sustainable transport.

12. Background Papers

None

13. Appendices

1. Systra Parking Study Baseline Report
2. Systra Parking Study Strategy Report