REPORT TO

EXECUTIVE

Relevant Officers: Alan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration

Relevant Cabinet Member Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Economic Development

Date of Meeting: 25 February 2019

TOWN CENTRE CAR PARKING STRATEGY

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To summarise the current and future demand for car parking in the Town Centre, to determine the additional car parking requirement and identify how the demand can be addressed.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To agree to the principal of providing the additional car parking spaces servicing the town centre to accommodate the demand identified in this report.

2.2 To authorise expenditure to the sum of up to £16,000,000 to deliver the additional town centre parking provision identified in the report and in the indicative designs attached at Appendix 8c.

2.3 To delegate authority to the Chief Executive to authorise expenditure and contracts to deliver the most appropriate option within the financial limits in this report.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 With the imminent additional loss of parking provision and increasing demand, the need to procure new parking provision in pursuit of Blackpool Council’s corporate, planning and transport objectives is becoming pressing. The development of Blackpool Central and Talbot Gateway will have major implications for car parking and coach handling facilities which need to be addressed as a priority. During peak periods, there are acute pressures on town centre car parks, which will increase as the major regeneration initiatives that are currently being driven forward by the Council in partnership with the private sector increase the attractiveness of the town centre and the resort. Parking and associated traffic circulation issues need to be addressed, together with the need to improve and replace Blackpool’s coach handling facilities.
It is thus imperative to ensure that the car parking infrastructure in the Town Centre is sufficient to support the growth and regeneration of this area with its attendant benefits to residents, businesses and visitors.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council’s approved budget? Yes

The expenditure is identified in Capital Programme 2019/20 report to be considered by the Council at its meeting on 27 February 2019.

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

The report outlines the various options for meeting car parking demand.

As outlined in paragraph 5.9 there is clearly no option to meet the Council’s objectives in terms of tourist growth or economic development without addressing car park demand.

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council priority is: “The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool”.

5.0 Background Information

5.1 Current Town Centre Parking Provision
Blackpool currently has 4,173 car parking spaces located in and around the town centre (see Appendix 8a). These comprise a mixture of council-controlled (3149 spaces) and 1,024 spaces in the three largest privately-controlled car parks, excluding Sainsbury’s (600 spaces) which has a three hour maximum stay.

5.2 The Existing Demand for Parking
The demand for parking in Blackpool is greatly affected by seasonal patterns, which means there is significant fluctuation between extremely quiet periods (i.e. January to March) and peak periods (i.e. school holidays between July and September and October half term). This is illustrated in Figure 1 below (tickets sold on all Council-controlled car parks). Additionally, there are numerous major events which create increased demand for parking including the Air Show weekend, the Illuminations Switch-On weekend, fireworks nights and the LiveWire Festival over the August Bank Holiday weekend. During these periods it is not uncommon to see all car parks along
Seasiders Way and in the town centre full by early afternoon. With pressure on town centre car parking increasing, under provision at peak times needs to be addressed. The existing provision is just adequate for normal usage, but the removal of Wilko and Tower Street from the parking stock will add to parking pressures, which will increase when other proposed developments come forward.

![All Pay Station Ticket Sales, April '14 - March '15](image)

Figure 1 - Source: AECOM Strategic Parking Review 2016

5.3 **Coach parking issues**
Coach parking issues were looked at as part of the AECOM Review but are not considered as part of this report.

5.4 Further consultation will take place regarding this between the Council, the developer of Blackpool Central and representatives of coach operators.

5.5 **Reductions in Car Parking Provision**
The first phase of Talbot Gateway Central Business District, completed in 2014, saw £80 million of investment with over 1,000 employees brought into the town centre based in Grade A1 office accommodation with accompanying retail units, the construction of a flagship Sainsbury’s store, the refurbishment of Talbot multi-storey car park and the provision of much improved traffic management and public spaces in the surrounding area. This development saw the loss of Seed Street (213 spaces), Swainson Street (36 spaces) and the NCP (74 spaces) car parks, a total loss of 323 spaces.

5.6 Talbot Gateway Phase 2 is set to commence in 2020 with the demolition of the Wilko building and construction of a new 4 star hotel, the completion of the tramway extension and a transport interchange (connecting the tram to the rail system). The car park above the Wilko store has a capacity of 460, and on completion of the new development on this site there will be a temporary surface car park providing 127 spaces, a net loss of 333. The Wilko store will be relocated to a new development on
Tower Street car park with a loss of a further 74 spaces.

5.7 Talbot Gateway Phase 3 is as yet uncommitted but initially looks to provide a building on part of the East Topping Street Car Park (the old St John’s Market). East Topping Street Car Park has a current capacity of 219 spaces. If this development were to proceed, which the Council remains confident of there would be a net loss of circa 100 spaces.

5.8 The actual loss outlined above is therefore 323 (ref paragraph 5.5) with a further potential loss of 507 spaces (ref paragraph 5.6 and 5.7), a total net loss of 830 spaces.

5.9 The Challenge
With the overall number of visits increasing (from c.17 million in 2015 to c.18 million in 2017) it is expected that the demand for parking and coach travel during the busy periods in Blackpool will increase even further. This demand is further increased by the many new developments either proposed or underway in the town centre particularly considering that these developments are constructed on existing surface car parks thus reducing the supply even further. The need for an urgent strategic review of future provision was therefore necessary.

5.10 In view of this, an officer working group was established, with representatives from Growth and Prosperity, Strategic Planning and Transport, Highways and Traffic and Parking Services to consider these issues and make proposals as to how they should be addressed in the light of:
- the policy context;
- the Strategic Parking Review produced by AECOM in 2016, and
- the development of the £1billion plus Growth and Prosperity Programme leading to a clearer understanding of the likely timing of future developments and their impact.

5.11 Policy Context
Blackpool Council needs to build on the Strategic Parking Review undertaken by AECOM in 2016, which accords with Blackpool’s Local Transport Plan (LTP) and Local Plan Core Strategy, taking account of current and future developments in Blackpool Town Centre. A key Blackpool Local Transport Plan objective is to: “Improve the efficiency and management of parking to support the local economy, especially for shoppers and visitors.”

5.12 Policy CS5: Connectivity of the Local Plan Core Strategy states “A sustainable, high quality transport network for Blackpool and a quality arrival experience will be achieved by the following measures: ...Working with coach operators and developers to provide sufficient, high quality, conveniently located coach passenger facilities and coach parking. ...Addressing parking capacity issues by providing sufficient, high quality and conveniently located car parks, to support the town centre and resort
economy and address wider issues of parking provision across the Borough.”

5.13 **AECOM’s Strategic Parking Review 2016**

AECOM were appointed to undertake a Strategic Parking Review with the aim of producing a comprehensive, long-term Parking Strategy which put forward actions to ensure that parking provision in Blackpool plays a part in assisting the tourist economy, Blackpool as a shopping destination and as an attractive place for residents and businesses. Their main recommendations and the subsequent steps that have been taken to implement their recommendations are:

- Solutions to increase car parking capacity including building new car parks, decking existing car parks and creating additional coach parking (reviewed in this report).
- Creating additional coach parking, a new coach station and improved layover facilities for coaches and their drivers (the coach station is referred to in this report and a separate review is being undertaken of coach parking and layover facilities).
- Reviewing and developing Parking Standards specific to the development aspirations and parking needs of the town (a review of Blackpool’s Parking Standards was undertaken in 2018 and is now being reviewed as part of the consultation currently taking place on the Local Plan Part 2).
- Providing 1,000 replacement parking spaces as part of the Blackpool Central development to serve the town centre, in addition to the parking needs of the development itself the requirement for 1,000 town centre car parking spaces has been updated from the 800 spaces specified in the Supplementary Planning Document, but these do not necessarily all have to be located on the Blackpool Central site). The potential developers of Blackpool Central are using this as their base figure in addition to the car parking that will be required to support their development.
- Implementing the Variable Message Signage (VMS) scheme (completed in 2018) and review the recommended signed routes into town centre car and coach parks. (underway)

5.14 **AECOM emphasised that:**

- “The fluctuating, seasonal nature of parking demand in Blackpool, coupled with a degree of uncertainty over the likely impact of parking provision and increase in demand resulting from future developments, means that there is no single preferred option for addressing demand issues. ...”
- Future demand for town centre car parking will also be influenced by proposed developments and that concurrent with this will be a reduction in the number of available parking spaces, including some of the privately operated parking stock.
- There is a need “To provide a spread of car parking options around Blackpool accounting for variable seasonal demand – ensuring sufficient parking provision for peak periods and considering the future economic growth aspirations for the town.”
• Car park users try to park as close to their intended destinations as possible.
• “Coaches are vital to the success of Blackpool’s future as they provide more sustainable access to the town and contribute significantly to the visitor economy.”

5.15 Growth and Prosperity Programme
An initial exercise has been undertaken to consider the impact of the main development projects in the town centre over the next 10 years, taking into account the potential increase in demand that these developments will create. The problem is compounded with the additional demand that will be created by the forthcoming town centre developments (listed in Appendix B). A number of assumptions have been made on car parking occupancy, from AECOM’s car park occupancy surveys undertaken in 2015, with further assumptions made about the likely occupancy of privately-controlled car parks.

5.16 Principal Car Parking Demand Pressures
In addition to the loss of parking listed above, the Growth and Prosperity programme includes a number of significant regeneration schemes within the town centre (both public and private sector) that will see the demand for parking increase. These include:
• Winter Gardens Conference Centre
• Town Centre (the new Wilko store and cinema development at Tower Street).
• Blackpool Central, The Sands, Premier Inn and Holiday Inn hotels,
• Talbot Gateway Phase 3

5.17 Winter Gardens Conference Centre
This new facility will provide an additional capacity accommodating 1,600 delegates which increases its capacity to circa 7,000 delegates. At present we are unable to determine precisely what the additional parking demand will be as it will fluctuate depending on the nature and level of conference activity. An estimate of 500 has been included for initial planning purposes.

5.18 Blackpool Central
In December 2018 the Council, Nikal and Media Invest Entertainments made a major announcement about the ambitious leisure proposals for Blackpool Central, a £300 million scheme designed to expand the leisure provision in Blackpool on the site of the Central Station car park. Negotiations are ongoing and a full assessment of demand will be made through the planning application process but the assumption currently being made for this site is that it will see an additional demand of circa 600 spaces on top of the spaces this car park already provides. It is currently planned for 1600 spaces to be provided (1250 onsite and a contribution towards 350 off site) though the exact quantum is still to be finalised. Any contribution will be utilised towards the solutions arising out of this report.
5.19 **Talbot Gateway Phases 2 and 3**
The Council is looking to bring forward more office-based developments through relocation or inward investment into the Town Centre as part of the Talbot Gateway Masterplan. Whilst discussions are underway regarding several possible opportunities none are yet at the stage where they can be announced and caution is naturally exercised on such matters as such enquiries often come and go. Nevertheless, it is vital that the potential implications of such developments and the opportunities they represent are factored into our plans (which will inevitably require some flexibility in their implementation). For this reason an initial assumption of c 750 spaces being required as part of future phases has been made though this figure may well vary.

5.20 **Other Town Centre Demand**
There will also be additional demand from the new Holiday Inn, the Sands and the Premier Inn hotels, in addition to the new Wilko store and cinema development at Tower Street (rough estimate of 150 spaces).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Projected reduction in Existing Spaces</th>
<th>Estimated Additional Demand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>333 - Talbot Gateway phase 2</td>
<td>750 - Talbot Gateway Phases 2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74 - Tower Street</td>
<td>350 - Blackpool Central (off-site)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 - East Topping Street</td>
<td>500 - Demand from Conference Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,086 - Existing Central Car Park</td>
<td>150 - Demand from new Hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>150 - Tower Street (Wilko and iMax)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total potential loss c. 1593</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total potential additional demand c. 1900</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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MAXIMUM TOTAL POTENTIAL ESTIMATED NEED – c. 2,243
(3,493 less 1,250 Blackpool Central on-site provision)

5.21 **Strategy for Meeting Demand**
This overall assessment indicates a potential need for c. 2,200 spaces but this needs to be moderated by a recognition that with the improved tram system and these developments taking place in the most sustainable of locations in the town centre (with bus, rail, tram and cycling provision) and there will be much shared use of spaces between daytime and evening uses. The actual additional demand is therefore likely to be significantly less than this. Thus the situation needs to be kept under review and the actual timing of providing additional car parking will also be dependent on progress on various development schemes which will affect future provision, hence the flexible approach that is proposed to be adopted.

5.22 **Options for Additional Provision**
An assessment has been made of a number of town centre sites potentially suitable for additional car parking against a series of criteria including proximity to key sites, public transport links, vehicular access, parking capacity, site establishment costs and
development costs. These are included in the exempt Appendix C in purely indicative terms.

5.23 Additional background information in relation to the project is included in Appendices 8c and 8d. Due to the ongoing negotiations at the time of publication this document is not for publication by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. It is considered on balance that the public interest would be not served by publishing information at this stage. It is anticipated some elements of these documents will be published as the strategy is implemented.

5.24 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

5.25 List of Appendices:

Appendix 8a: Town Centre Car Park locations and capacity
Appendix 8b: Known and Potential Developments impacting Parking supply and demand
Appendix 8c: Assessment of Town Centre Car Parking Options (exempt)
Appendix 8d: Financial and Legal Considerations (exempt)

7.0 Legal Considerations:

7.1 There are significant legal considerations which are included in Appendix 8d – exempt from publication.

8.0 Human Resources considerations:

8.1 Details with regards to human resources will be undertaken in due course.

9.0 Equalities Considerations:

9.1 Any future car park provision will include spaces for disabled persons.

10.0 Financial considerations:

10.1 See Appendix 8d – exempt from publication which sets out the basis on which a provision of up to £16 million is sought from the Capital Programme to increase town centre car parking provision.

11.0 Risk Management considerations:

11.1 The primary risk is that of not securing sufficient car parking in the Town Centre and thus potentially undermining the huge economic benefits that will be delivered by the Growth and Prosperity Programme.
11.2 There will also be the need to future proof any such development to cater for the planned increases in electric vehicles and the phasing out of diesel and petrol fuelled cars.

12.0 Ethical considerations:

12.1 None.

13.0 Internal / External Consultation undertaken:

13.1 Due to the commercial sensitivity of the project, consultation has been restricted to date. Wider consultation will take place following and subject to the agreement of the Executive to proceed with the proposals.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 Aecom : Strategic Parking Review 2016

Blackpool Leisure Quarter Supplementary Planning Document 2013

14.0 Key decision information:

14.1 Is this a key decision? Yes

14.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number: 4/2019

14.3 If a key decision, is the decision required in less than five days? No

14.4 If yes, please describe the reason for urgency:

15.0 Call-in information:

15.1 Are there any grounds for urgency, which would cause this decision to be exempt from the call-in process? No

15.2 If yes, please give reason:
TO BE COMPLETED BY THE head OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

16.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):
   Date informed: 15 February 2019  Date approved:

17.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):
17.1

18.0 Executive decision:
18.1
18.2 Date of Decision:

19.0 Reason(s) for decision:
19.1 Date Decision published:

20.0 Executive Members present:
20.1

21.0 Call-in:
21.1

22.0 Notes:
22.1