

Report to:	EXECUTIVE
Relevant Officers:	Alan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration
Relevant Cabinet Member	Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Job Creation
Date of Meeting:	27 February 2023

TOWN CENTRE CAR PARKING STRATEGY

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To provide and update on the Town Centre Car Parking Strategy since it was agreed at the Executive on 25 February 2019, to summarise the current and future demand for car parking in the Town Centre, and to set out the further steps that need to be taken in order to meet that demand.

2.0 Recommendations:

- 2.1 To note the changes in Town Centre car parking provision since the 2019 report.
- 2.2 To agree to the principle of providing additional car parking spaces in a multi-storey car park servicing the town centre to accommodate the demand as set out in the report
- 2.2 To authorise the Director of Communications and Regeneration to pursue detailed negotiations with the developer and other interested parties to assemble the land required and bring forward proposals for surface car parking and the multi-storey car park as outlined in the report.
- 2.3 To instruct relevant Officers to commence all necessary preparatory works for the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order to support the site assembly of the land required for the car park and any associated road improvements and road closures.
- 2.4 To agree, in principle, that if other options are exhausted then the Council would consider the use of Compulsory Purchase Order powers to assemble the site outlined in Appendix 7c.
- 2.5 That Officers be required to bring a further report to the Executive to authorise the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order should such powers be required.

- 2.6 To note that expenditure will be incurred within the existing approval in the Capital Programme as authorised in February 2019, and that further authorisation will be sought on the final proposals as necessary once the detailed design of the car park has been completed and costed.
- 2.7 To delegate authority to the Director of Communications and Regeneration to authorise expenditure and contracts to deliver the additional car parking proposed within the financial limits already approved
- 2.8 To authorise the Head of Legal to prepare legal documentation and enter into and complete appropriate documents/contracts as necessary to complete any associated transactions

3.0 Reasons for recommendations:

3.1 With the recent loss of parking provision and increasing demand in the town centre, the need to procure new parking provision in pursuit of Blackpool Council’s corporate, planning, transport and growth objectives is becoming pressing. The development of Blackpool Central, Talbot Gateway and Houndshill Phase 2 are having major implications for car parking and although some progress has been made since 2019, including the assembly of land and provision of additional spaces further action, as anticipated then, is now needed to support the growth and regeneration of this area with its attendant benefits to residents, businesses and visitors.

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

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

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

The report outlines the steps that have been taken to increase current capacity and the need now to further develop that capacity with the provision of a multi-storey car park as anticipated in 2019. As outlined below, the Council will not be able to meet its objectives in terms of economic development and tourist growth without addressing car park demand and increasing the provision.

5.0 Council Priority:

5.1 The relevant Council Priority is: “The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool”.

6.0 **Background Information**

6.1 Changes in Town Centre Parking Provision since 2019

Blackpool currently has 3,693 car parking spaces (4,173 in 2019) located in and around the town centre (see Appendix 7a). These comprise a mixture of Council-controlled (2,067 spaces) and 1,026 spaces in the largest privately-controlled car parks, excluding Sainsbury's (600 spaces) which has a three hour maximum stay. This reduction of 480 spaces since 2019 is predominantly accounted for by the loss of spaces at the Wilko Multi Storey, Tower Street, East Topping Street, Blackpool Central and Houndshell Phase 2.

6.2 The Existing Demand for Parking

The existing demand for parking in Blackpool is much the same as 2019 and 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).

The existing provision is just adequate for the winter period (i.e. January to March), but the removal of Wilko, Tower Street, East Topping Street and a significant portion of Central from the parking stock has added to parking pressures, which will only increase this year as the other developments, now underway, come into use and create additional car park demand.

6.3 Coach parking issues

Coach parking issues were looked at as part of the AECOM Review but are not considered as part of this report. Further consultation is taking place regarding this between the Council, the developer of Blackpool Central and representatives of coach operators.

6.4 Reductions in Car Parking Provision

Talbot Gateway Phase 2 commenced in 2020 with the demolition of the Wilko building. The car park above the Wilko store had 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 is being relocated to the Houndshell Phase 2 extension on Tower Street car park with a loss of a further 74 spaces.

The construction of the new Civil Service Hub (Talbot Gateway Phase 3) started in January 2023 and will provide a building on part of the East Topping Street Car Park (the old St John's Market). East Topping Street Car Park had a capacity of 210 spaces now reduced by 130 spaces to 80 spaces.

6.5 Additional Car Parking Provision since 2019

Since the February 2019 the following additional spaces have been provided:

- 46 spaces at Leopold Grove (which has the capacity for 118 in total) which is now in the Council's ownership and;
- before summer there will be an additional 73 spaces at South King Street where the existing building is currently being demolished (152 total).

These figures are included in 6.1 as they either have or are about to be provided.

Once Blackpool Central multi-storey car park is complete later this year there will be an additional 864 spaces, but this will reduce to 647 due to the loss of Chapel St multi-storey car park (217 spaces) as the Blackpool Central land is drawn down although there will be additional spaces provided in subsequent phases. These figures are not included in 6.1

In addition a further development is under discussion (but not yet committed) to bring forward a building on the old Apollo site. This area currently provides no car park spaces but would be able to accommodate 100 parking spaces. But if this development were to proceed 60 potential spaces would be lost but there would be a net gain of 40 spaces. These figures are not included in 6.1

6.6 Principal Additional 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 are seeing/will see the demand for parking increase. For a full list see Appendix 7b. These include:

a) Winter Gardens Conference Centre

This new facility has provided an additional capacity accommodating 1,600 delegates which increased its capacity to circa 7,000 delegates. The level of additional demand will fluctuate depending on the nature and level of conference activity.

b) Blackpool Central

Following the signing of the land sale agreement in 2020 Nikal are now bringing forward 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. Following approval of the planning application a 1306 space car park is currently being constructed and is due to be complete in Autumn 2023. Additional parking requirements are also being considered as part of future phases.

c) Talbot Gateway Phases 2 and 3

The Holiday Inn in Phase 2 is now nearing completion, and construction of the Civil Service Hub is now underway and whilst this is in the most sustainable of locations with tram, rail and bus access the additional spaces proposed to be provided in this report are designed to meet this additional demand. In addition there is a further Office development (as yet uncommitted) but is looking to provide a building on the old Apollo site

d) The Multiversity

The Multiversity that has recently been announced is to provide a new educational facility in the Town centre that will increase the Blackpool and the Fylde College's capacity, expanding the College's Higher Education offer to 2,300 students in 2025/26 rising to c. 2,900 per year by 2034/35 with a subsequent major increase in town centre footfall and spend. A detailed analysis will be required once a planning application has been prepared.

e) 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 Backlot Cinema.

6.7 Strategy for Meeting Demand

This overall assessment in 2019 previously indicated a potential need for c 2,243 spaces but was 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 was likely to be significantly less than this. The situation has been kept under review and the actual timing of providing additional car parking was always regarded as being dependent on progress on various development schemes which will affect future provision and a flexible approach has been maintained including the provision of additional surface car parking when the opportunity arises.

As part of this approach, following the 2019 report and widespread consultations by the Council's Planning Policy team on the Local Plan Part 2, the site identified as "Land at Church St (MUSA1)" (old Syndicate site) in the Local Plan Part 2 (see Appendix 7c) has been identified for a multi storey car-park. The Local Plan Part 2 is scheduled for consideration for formal adoption by Full Council on 22 February 2023. This decision was made after determining that this is the most suitable location 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. The Local Plan also identified the requirement for a low cost food store on the ground floor, but this will only be provided if there is commercial interest and it is financially viable.

The proposed multi-storey car park on the “Land at Church St (MUSA1)” will accommodate c700 parking spaces (or 600 spaces if there is a food store on the ground floor). The Council already owns the majority of the site and will require the acquisition of 5 properties at the end of King Street as shown in Appendix 7c. It is proposed that land is used for surface car parking in the interim whilst the design and final costings of the multi-storet car park are undertaken.

In addition to the above it is also proposed to acquire additional land through “opportunity purchases” that come to the market in the short term that can be utilised as surface car parks and in the long term potentially be part of the expansion of Talbot Gateway.

6.8 Property Matters

The land edged shown at Appendix 7c is thus required to enable the development of this multi-storey car-park. The parties within the area are aware that the Council are considering the future planning of the area and notices under section 16 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 have been served requiring information as to ownership of the properties.

This area clearly affects land other than land in the Council’s ownership. Whilst the Council is already pursuing discussions with the interested landowners following meetings with owners/occupiers it is clear that the acquisition by agreement of all of the subject land may not be possible within a realistic timeframe or at all. Consequently, the Council has to consider whether it would support securing the whole of the area required for the regeneration by utilising Compulsory Purchase powers in effecting site assembly and pursuing any necessary road closures. This is a normal process in large regeneration projects.

The Council has been acquiring property within the land required for this development and has the controlling interest of circa 75% of the property required. In order to progress this development it is vital that the remaining interests are acquired to complete the assembly of the whole site as soon as practicable.

Should the Executive be prepared to agree by approval of the recommendation in principle to making a Compulsory Purchase Order, a further detailed report would be submitted if reasonable attempts to assemble the site through negotiation in a timely manner are unsuccessful. These recommendations towards a Compulsory Purchase Order would create greater certainty amongst stakeholders that the site will be assembled in a timely manner to enable the scheme to be implemented. This would enable such stakeholders to plan their business accordingly. It will similarly reaffirm the Council’s support for the scheme.

6.9 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

Although Appendix 7d Financial Considerations currently exempt from 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.

7.0 List of Appendices:

- 7.1 Appendix 7a: Town Centre Car Park locations and capacity
- Appendix 7b: Known and Potential Developments impacting Parking supply and demand
- Appendix 7c: Area required for new Multi Storey Car park
- Appendix 7d: Financial Considerations (exempt from publication)

8.0 Financial Considerations:

- 8.1 See Appendix 7d- exempt from publication which sets out the costs of site assembly already incurred against originally approved capital provision in 2019. As there have been significant increases in inflation and the cost of borrowing since 2019 it will now be necessary to design and tender the car park before a final costs can be agreed to which further approval will be sought in due course.

9.0 Legal Considerations:

- 9.1 There are a range of powers which the Council can use to facilitate land assembly. In the circumstances the powers under Section 226 of the Town and Country Planning Act would be the most appropriate. This allows the Council to acquire land which is 'suitable for and required in order to secure the carrying out of development, re-development or improvement', or is required for the 'proper planning of an area'.
- 9.2 The Council recognises that it would be premature at this stage to make a Compulsory Purchase Order whilst negotiations are continuing. Consequently, it is proposed that a further report be submitted to the Executive to authorise a Compulsory Purchase Order should the negotiations for the remaining interests not be concluded in a timely manner and upon the Council being satisfied that there is a compelling case in the public interest to do so.
- 9.3 The Director of Communications and Regeneration accepts that the Executive will need to be satisfied that all reasonable attempts have been made to assemble the site through negotiation as compulsory purchase should be used as a 'last resort'. The Council has been progressing voluntary acquisitions for some time and will continue to do so.

10.0 Equalities considerations:

10.1 Any future car park provision will include spaces for disabled persons

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. 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 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 The proposed scheme utilises a brownfield site within the established built-up inner area of Blackpool and provides a complimentary use to support the surrounding major investments.

12.2 The project will give consideration to the Council's Climate Change declaration, with sustainability and carbon reduction as core principles. A Sustainability Assessment will be undertaken as part of the scope of the project to support this agenda and review reasonable appropriate measures of sustainability that can be incorporated into the development to reduce the overall carbon footprint including having regard to the Council's Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy approved in February 2023 and other relevant policies.

12.3 With specific regards to the land assembly, the main considerations given at this stage will relate to the methods for holding and demolishing properties once they have been acquired, for example demolition, waste disposal or reclamation of materials.

13.0 Internal / External Consultation undertaken:

13.1 Internal consultation with the Growth and Prosperity Board, Legal and Finance and extensive external consultation as part of the Local Plan review process.

14.0 Background papers:

- 14.1
- Executive Report EX21-2019
 - Aecom : Strategic Parking Review 2016
<https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Your-Council/The-Council/Council-constitution-and-plans/Council-strategies-policies-and-plans.aspx>

15.0 Key decision information:

15.1 Is this a key decision? Yes

15.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number: 13/2022

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

15.4 If **yes**, please describe the reason for urgency:

16.0 Call-in information:

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

16.2 If **yes**, please give reason:

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

17.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):

Date informed: 17 February 2023 Date approved:

18.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

18.1

19.0 Summary of Discussion:

19.1

20.0 Executive decision:

20.1

21.0 Date of Decision:

21.1

22.0 Reason(s) for decision:

22.1

23.0 Date Decision published:

23.1

24.0 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

24.1

25.0 Executive Members in attendance:

25.1

26.0 Call-in:

26.1

27.0 Notes:

27.1