

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 16 SEPTEMBER 2008

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PLANNING POLICY AND
TRANSPORT

8. MODIFICATIONS TO JACKSON SQUARE MULTI STOREY CAR PARK
– PROGRESS REPORT AND CAPITAL BID

WARD(S) AFFECTED: BISHOP'S STORTFORD CENTRAL

'D' RECOMMENDATION - that (A) the progress to date and proposals for further modifications to the Jackson Square multi-storey car park be noted; and

(B) the Committee supports a capital bid to the Executive for £120,000 to fund the creation of a new exit from the car park should this be confirmed as a viable improvement to the current position.

1.0 Purpose/Summary of Report

1.1 This report advises of measures East Herts Council is taking to improve parking arrangements in Jackson Square Multi Storey Car Park and in particular access and egress. The report advises that although some enhancements can be funded from existing budgets, capital funding would be required should the Council wish to create a new exit from the car park onto Riverside. The report seeks the Environment Scrutiny Committee's comments and support for these proposals, which would then be put to the Executive on 14 October 2008.

2.0 Contribution to the Council's Corporate Objectives

2.1 **Fit for purpose, services fit for you**

Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.

Shaping now, shaping the future

Safeguard and enhance our unique mix of rural and urban communities ensuring sustainable, economic and social

opportunities including the continuation of effective development control and other measures.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Since it opened fully in mid-2007, users of Jackson Square MSCP have experienced occasional problems with accessing and leaving the car park. Sometimes there is no obvious cause. Sometimes an event such as an accident on the M11, causing traffic to divert through the town, is the trigger. On other occasions, often just before a public holiday, sheer volume of traffic causes the car park and often the roads outside to come to a standstill.
- 3.2 Officers have now been able to observe the car park in operation for a full year and have the additional benefit of many comments and suggestions from members of the public and the local media. Whilst it must be accepted that car parks can become congested for reasons beyond anyone's control, officers now believe a number of measures can be taken to reduce the risk of congestion happening at Jackson Square MSCP and its impact should it occur.

4.0 Report

- 4.1 Just as officers have identified that there is no single cause of the occasional problems experienced in Jackson Square so there is no single solution. Additional complexity is created in that some of the problems originate on the highway, which is under the jurisdiction of Hertfordshire County Council. Officers are anxious not to make changes within the car park which may have adverse consequences elsewhere.
- 4.2 East Herts Council's Parking and Property Services teams have identified a number of improvements that can be made within the car park. These will be funded from an existing capital budget for Jackson Square improvements. This work began in August 2008 with revisions to the signing and lining of the upper floor. By virtue of the management agreement in operation, East Herts Council will recharge 50% of the cost of these works to the owner of the shopping centre, Khandahar.

Action	Timescale
Re-line upper floor and create new traffic flows	August 2008
Augment signage on upper floor	August 2008

Re-line areas of ground floor and create new traffic flows	September/October 2008
Augment signage on lower floor	September/October 2008

- 4.3 Of greater significance and cost would be the creation of a new vehicular exit (and linked pedestrian access) onto Riverside. Officers believe this new exit would be the single best action the Council could take within the limitations posed by the building and its environment, to ameliorate the current problems. Under normal circumstances upper floor traffic would then leave the car park using the current exit onto Adderley Road and lower floor traffic would leave from the new exit. The erection of a lockable barrier within the car park would however give flexibility in this regard.
- 4.4 To establish whether a new exit would be beneficial and would justify the capital expenditure, East Herts Council has worked with the County Council to model its likely effects on the road network and to seek a new balance between the needs of users of the highway and of the car park. This work has been funded from the Property Services budget identified above.
- 4.5 The results of this modelling work were evaluated by officers at a meeting on 1 September 2008. A preferred model has now been agreed which would be beneficial to car park users whilst having few adverse consequences for the highway. The County Council wishes to consider this matter further and anticipates being able to give East Herts Council its *formal* position before the date this report is to be considered by the Environment Scrutiny Committee. Officers will present this response to the Committee in the form of a supplementary report or if necessary an oral report on the evening.
- 4.6 Although for reasons stated officers cannot yet advise with certainty that a second exit strategy can be pursued, the growing likelihood together with a requirement to plan the works has led officers to make this capital bid and to prepare a planning application.
- 4.7 The planning application would be made should the County Council confirm the second exit strategy as viable from a highways perspective. It would be necessary for the application to be referred to an appropriate meeting of the Development Control Committee – anticipated for autumn 2008. Subject to the Committee’s approval officers propose that the works be scheduled for the period between New Year and Easter 2009.

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 Hertfordshire County Council (as Highway Authority) has been consulted and is fully involved in the development of the second exit proposal. These proposals were outlined in a Member Information Bulletin issued to the District and Town Councils in April 2008. Representatives of the management of the Jackson Square Shopping Centre and of the anchor tenant, J Sainsbury, have attended and contributed to project meetings. The Bishop's Stortford Town Council and Chamber of Commerce have been kept abreast of key developments.
- 5.2 East Herts Council is required to consult with the owner of the shopping centre, Khandahar and this consultation is ongoing.
- 5.3 Additional consultation would be required should this proposal go ahead. This would be achieved in part through the progression of a planning application and the promotion of a Traffic Regulation Order in respect of necessary modifications to the highway in Riverside.

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 Planning permission would be required before the second exit proposal could be progressed. A tendering exercise would be required to place the works and a Traffic Regulation Order would be required to make the necessary changes to the highway.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 The costs of the works identified in this report and funded from within existing capital budgets are as follows:

- i) Modification of signing and lining to upper floor - £12,750
- ii) Modification of signing and lining to ground floor - £6,000
- iii) Funding of feasibility study for second exit - £3,500

50% of the above costs will be re-charged to the owner of the shopping centre, Khandahar.

- 7.2 Officers estimate the cost of creation of this second exit as being in the region of £120,000. East Herts Council considers that 50% of this cost can also be recharged to Khandahar and this matter is under discussion with them. Again, officers propose to present the definitive position to the Committee in the form of a supplementary

report or if necessary an oral report on the evening. At present this capital bid is for the full projected cost of this project.

7.3 Should the second exit go ahead officers hope to schedule the works for the period between New Year and Easter 2009. The works will inevitably cause disruption and the loss of some parking spaces for a period of time. Other car parks in the locality will be able to absorb some of the displaced vehicles. It is not possible at this stage to quantify the extent of the disruption or the effect on the Council's income budget; however when an estimate can be arrived at the current year's estimates will need to be adjusted accordingly.

8.0 Human Resource Implications

8.1 None perceived

9.0 Risk Management Implications

9.1 The vitality of Bishop's Stortford is based in part on its attractiveness as a shopping and entertainment centre. The provision of quality car parking is an important element of this attraction. Whilst it is important that problems with Jackson Square are not overstated, opportunities to improve its running should be seized where they appear beneficial on a cost benefit basis.

9.2 There remains a likelihood that even with the improvements recommended in this report Jackson Square may experience difficulties from time to time. The Council will therefore need to manage expectations in terms of the benefits these changes will engender.

Background Papers

Plans of second exit proposal have been prepared as part of an anticipated planning application. (Appendix A on pages 32 - 33).

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