

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 14 SEPTEMBER 2010

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

6. THE “GRANGE PADDOCKS PROJECT” – REVENUE AND CAPITAL IMPLICATIONS

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL BISHOP’S STORTFORD WARDS

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To inform the Committee of the rationale for planned changes to parking arrangements in Bishop’s Stortford – in particular the proposals in the MTFP relating to Grange Paddocks.
- To outline the expenditure and income assumptions underpinning these changes.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(A)	The Committee scrutinises the elements of this three year programme, as detailed in the current Medium Term Financial Plan; and
(B)	The Executive be informed of any recommendations arising from this process.

1.0 Background

1.1 The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) agreed by the Executive on 9 February 2010 as part of the budget setting process includes a three year programme of changes to current parking arrangements in Bishop’s Stortford. In particular it sets out in financial terms a programme that would facilitate the introduction of pay and display parking on the Grange Paddocks site as part of the Council’s response to those changes.

- 1.2 Work on this programme began in 2010/11. The programme is complex, due partly to a requirement for it to ameliorate the effect on parking income of planned and expected events in Bishop's Stortford as outlined below.
- 1.3 The sale of the Causeway site takes car parking on that site out of the control of the council and will reduce the Council's parking income. When completed, the Causeway development will provide more parking than exists in the town at present; however it cannot be known if this additional provision will completely satisfy parking needs in the longer term, particularly given the additional demand the redevelopment is likely to generate.
- 1.4 Members will be aware that on occasion the centre of Bishop's Stortford can become congested. Parking and traffic management orthodoxy is that long stay parkers who may only need access to their car first thing in the morning and last thing in the afternoon should be dissuaded from driving into the centre of towns. Parking in town centres should be primarily for short stay parkers (e.g. shoppers) and should be charged at rates commensurate with its proximity to shops.
- 1.5 Current East Herts policy is that where appropriate, users of services should contribute directly to the cost of their provision. The Council owns Elm Road car park and the Rye Street/Grange Paddocks car parks. The former is underused while the latter is heavily used but not charged for. It is assumed the Council would wish to secure an appropriate return on these assets whilst at the same time providing long term parking for commuters and people working in the town. The proposals under discussion seek to provide that facility and some overspill short term parking a little closer to the town.
- 1.6 The programme also seeks to complement a number of other proposals to improve walking access between the site and Bishop's Stortford town centre.
- 1.7 Against this backdrop there have also been calls for greater protection of residents' parking in the area around Grange Paddocks.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 In summary the programme of changes known informally as the "Grange Paddocks Project" incorporates the following elements

which are explained more fully in cost terms in **Essential Reference Paper B** and in chronological terms in **Essential Reference Paper C**:

- a) Conversion of the council's Elm Road car park from mixed use to long stay pay and display parking only.
- b) Refurbishment of most areas of the Rye Street/Grange Paddocks car parks.
- c) Introduction of a resident permit parking scheme in streets surrounding the above car parks (the "Chantry" area).
- d) Conversion of the council's Link Road and Northgate End pay and display car parks from long stay to predominantly short stay to compensate for the loss of the Causeway site.
- e) Introduction of predominantly long stay pay and display parking at the council's Rye Street and Grange Paddocks car parks to accommodate long stay parkers displaced from Link Road and Northgate End and the additional long stay parkers anticipated as a result of the Causeway development.
- f) Introduction of a pay and display rebate scheme to allow users of the Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre continued free parking.
- g) Creation of a separate pedestrian footbridge across the River Stort at Grange Paddocks. (Property Services lead).
- h) Improvements to the riverside walk from Grange Paddocks to Bishop's Stortford town centre. (Property Services lead)

2.2 These activities are linked and should happen in a set sequence. Few could be dropped without jeopardising the effectiveness of the overall programme. For example, it is imperative that local residents of the "Chantry" area have the opportunity to be protected by means of an on-street resident permit parking scheme before pay and display charges are introduced in the Rye Street and Grange Paddocks car parks.

2.3 Some of the key assumptions underpinning these planned changes are considered in **Essential Reference Paper D**, where a simple sensitivity analysis is also provided.

- 2.4 Although not strictly linked to the Grange Paddocks Project there are other Bishop's Stortford parking matters about which Members may wish to be aware:
- i) East Herts Council may elect to relinquish control of Apton Road car park from October 2011. This mixed use car park is on County Council land and a rent revision effective from 2010/11 saw the rent increase from £6,500 to £45,000 per annum. October 2011 is the earliest point at which East Herts Council can break the lease.
 - ii) Bishop's Stortford Town Council, on behalf of the Brazier Trust, has signalled its willingness to lease an additional area of land to East Herts Council. This could link the existing Link Road and Northgate End car parks as well as creating additional parking capacity for the town.

3.0 Implications/Consultations

- 3.1 Failure to anticipate and plan for the development of the Causeway site would cause parking in Bishop's Stortford to come under considerable pressure. This would impact traffic management and the economic viability of the town. (Members may recall the difficulties the town experienced during the rebuilding of the Jackson Square MSCP).
- 3.2 Failure to properly control traffic in Bishop's Stortford before, during and after the Causeway development will result in environmental degradation. Local residents will continue to suffer from the effects of commuters parking in their streets.

Background Papers

- i) Grange Paddocks Project – Project Initiation Document
- ii) MTFP

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ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

<p>Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives:</p>	<p>Pride in East Herts <i>Improve standards of the neighbourhood and environmental management in our towns and villages.</i></p> <p>Caring about what's built and where <i>Care for and improve our natural and built environment.</i></p> <p>Shaping now, shaping the future <i>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.</i></p>
<p>Consultation:</p>	<p>The Council has commenced a programme of consultation with residents of the "Chantry" area of Bishop's Stortford over the possibility of introducing a resident permit parking scheme in this area. If the scheme proceeds the process will culminate in the advertisement of a Traffic Regulation Order. This is a form of consultation which will give any interested party the right to object to the Council's proposals.</p> <p>The introduction of pay and display charges at the Rye Street and Grange Paddocks car parks will require the advertisement of a Traffic Regulation Order which is a form of consultation and which will give any interested party the right to object to the Council's proposals.</p> <p>The re-designation of Link Road and Northgate End car parks will require the advertisement of a Traffic Regulation Order which is a form of consultation and which will give any interested party the right to object to the Council's proposals.</p> <p>The making permanent and introduction of pay and display charges on the gravelled overspill area of the Grange Paddocks car park will require planning permission and officers have begun the process by means of informal discussions with planning colleagues.</p> <p>The creation of the pedestrian footbridge over the River Stort will require planning permission and officers have commenced informal discussions with planning colleagues.</p>

	<p>The creation of a properly surfaced and lit riverside walk linking Grange Paddocks with the town centre will require planning permission and officers have commenced informal discussions with planning colleagues.</p> <p>The Town Council and Town Centre Management Partnership are identified as having a legitimate interest in this project and officers would expect to engage with both at various points during the project. Members may wish to suggest other individuals or bodies with which officers might engage during the process.</p>
Legal:	See above.
Financial:	The capital and revenue implications of this programme are detailed in the current MTFP and in Essential Reference Paper B & D .
Human Resource:	None perceived.
Risk Management:	N/A