EAST HERTS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15 MARCH 2011

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR PLANNING POLICY AND TRANSPORT

5.   OAK TREE CLOSE RESIDENTS' CAR PARK

WARD(S) AFFECTED: BISHOP'S STORTFORD CENTRAL.

Purpose/Summary of Report:

- To invite the Committee to review the status of the above parcel of land owned by East Herts Council and its current use as a car park under the management of the local Residents' Association.

RECOMMENDATION FOR ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: that	
(A)	The current status and use of the land, accessed from Oak Tree Close in Bishop's Stortford, be noted; and
(B)	The history and context of the current arrangement be considered and the Executive be advised of the Environment Scrutiny Committee's recommendations in respect of a range of options for the future use of this land, as detailed in the report now submitted.

1.0   Background

1.1   East Herts Council owns a parcel of land, accessed from Oak Tree Close in Bishop's Stortford, which is currently leased to the local Residents' Association for them to operate on an autonomous basis as an off-street car park, for the benefit of local residents. Other options for the use of this land have recently been discussed by Officers, as an on-street resident permit parking scheme (the "Newtown" scheme) now operates in surrounding streets.

2.0   Report

2.1   In 1995 East Herts Council sold a parcel of land off Portland Road, Bishop's Stortford for development as housing and retained ownership of a small area which was developed for use as a car park for the benefit of local residents. The car park with space for

approximately 22 vehicles is leased to and managed by the local Residents' Association, which pays East Herts Council a rent of £300 per annum. The lease is renewed on a yearly basis.

2.2   The Council's Asset and Estates manager advises that the intention behind providing this car park in 1995 was to provide an amenity that would mitigate on-street parking problems caused by the area's proximity to the town centre until a suitable successor arrangement, such as an on-street resident permit parking scheme, was introduced in the area. Portland Road and Oak Tree Close are now incorporated within the "Newtown" resident permit parking scheme.

2.3   Parking Services Officers have proposed absorbing the Oak Tree Close car park within the existing on-street permit parking scheme, making it available to all householders in the area of the scheme, rather than the smaller number permitted access by the Residents' Association on terms they themselves set.

2.4   A scrutiny call-in of this particular aspect of a recent non-key decision concerning a proposed revision to the current Off-Street Parking Places Order evoked a degree of interest among local residents and local Councillors. This led to this proposal being withdrawn from the draft Order and referred to the Council's Environment Scrutiny Committee for wider consideration and debate.

2.5   The Council's Parking Service can confirm that it has not received any complaints from residents within the surrounding on-street resident permit parking scheme claiming a lack of on-street parking in the area. As has been suggested above, absorbing the car park into the scheme would however follow through on the understanding conveyed to residents and others when the wider area of land was developed as housing in 1995.

2.6   For the above reason, the Council's Parking Service confirms that it has no current interest in absorbing the car park into the surrounding "Newtown" resident permit parking scheme on parking on traffic management grounds as on-street parking provision in the area appears to be sufficient for residents' current needs.

2.7   Members will recognise that the Council must reserve the right to review the status and use of this land at any time in the future; including the amount of any rent required should it continue to be

used as a car park. Officers propose to submit a report to a forthcoming meeting of the East Herts Executive inviting it to confirm how it would wish to resolve the future of this land.

3.0   Implications/Consultations

3.1   East Herts Council owns a piece of land in the middle of a primarily residential area of Bishop's Stortford. Absorbing the car park into the surrounding resident permit parking scheme would effectively follow through on an understanding conveyed to residents and others when the original development took place in 1995.

3.2   Should Members concur with Parking Services officers' position in this matter, that at present the car park should not be absorbed into the surrounding on-street scheme, other options for its future may arise. These may include allowing the current arrangement to continue indefinitely, revising the rent currently charged for its use or selling the land. Such alternatives would not be initiated or led by officers from within Parking Services as they would not arise from demonstrable parking or traffic management needs.

Background Papers
None.

Contact Member: Councillor M G Carver – Executive Member for Planning Policy and Transport.

Contact Officer: Andrew Pulham, Parking Manager, Extn: 2030.

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Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives:	**Fit for purpose, services fit for you** *Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.*
Consultation:	East Herts Council Asset and Estates Manager
Legal:	N/A
Financial:	The car park is currently leased to the local Residents' Association for £300 per annum. Should the car park be absorbed into the surrounding on-street resident permit parking scheme, by way of indication, charges for resident parking permits in 2011/12 will be: 1st permit - £34 per annum 2nd permit - £68 per annum Visitor vouchers – 10p hr Visitor vouchers – 5p hr (pensioner households) Business permits - £300 per annum
Human Resource:	N/A
Risk Management:	N/A