

 Executive 12th October 2011		Agenda Item No. 6
Title	Future provision of parking at Abbey Fields	
For further information about this report please contact	Ian Coker	
Wards of the District directly affected	Kenilworth Abbey	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number		
Background Papers		

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	Yes
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	Yes - 301
Equality & Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken	No
Not required at this stage	

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Deputy Chief Executive	14th Sept 2011	Andrew Jones
CMT		
Section 151 Officer	14 th Sept	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	14th Sept 2011	Andrew Jones
Finance	14 th Sept	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)	8 th Sept	Councillor Shilton / Gallagher
Consultation & Community Engagement		
Consultation has taken place with Kenilworth Town Council and a working groups to finalise the detailed management of the car park based on the principles identified in 7.10 – 7.12 is being organised.		
Final Decision?		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Abbey Fields is a scheduled monument located in Kenilworth. Part of the Abbey Fields operates as an unregulated parking area for people using Abbey Fields including dog walkers, users of the swimming pool, visitors to the local shops and Church and residents living in the area with limited off and on street parking.
- 1.2 Given there is no specific budget to maintain the parking area and that no income is received to off-set this expenditure the report seeks to identify the various options open to the council in order to continue to operate this area for parking.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Executive agrees that a formal parking area on the land at Abbey Fields currently used for car parking be negotiated with English Heritage which allows the operation of Pay and Display as a method for managing parking on the site.
- 2.2 That the Executive agrees that officers finalise discussions with Kenilworth Town Council regarding the appropriate level of enforcement and charging which should be introduced at Abbey Fields aimed at maximising the use of the parking area for users of Abbey Fields and the immediate area and removing the option for long stay commuter parking subject to Executive agreeing Future provision of parking at Abbey Fields.
- 2.3 That £155,000 from the car park improvement capital fund is earmarked to cover the cost of the works which are planned at Abbey Fields subject to an agreement with English Heritage being achieved. See 5.2 and Appendix 1.

3. **REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 A formal parking area operating a Pay & Display system is vital as it supports the commercial operation of the swimming pool, local shops and many functions at the church as well as the needs of many local residents who visit Abbey Fields.
- 3.2 To find the best solution for managing the car park input from Kenilworth Town Council via a working group is vital.
- 3.3 Funds are required to meet the cost and are available from the capital budget to cover this cost.

4. **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 4.1 **Policy Framework** – there are no changes to the current policy framework.
- 4.2 **Fit for the Future** – The parking area plays a valuable role in supporting local shops, the church and visitors to Abbey Fields which in turn helps to make Warwick District a great place to live work and visit.
- 4.3 Unregulated parking already takes place here. The creation of regulated parking area will result in income being generated which would assist in

offsetting the cost of providing a long term solution to the parking needs in this area.

5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 The cost of maintaining the area for parking over the last four years is £48,000. This work has been funded from the corporate property repair and improvement budget but would be removed from that schedule if it were a fee paying car park. Currently the Council receives no income from the car park so the maintenance costs are direct cost to the authority. This would not be the case if the car park became a fee paying car park as it would be funded from the car park maintenance budget.
- 5.2 The cost of delivering the plan now being discussed with English Heritage is in the order of £155k. The plan would provide a proper car park surface and the ability to operate Pay and Display parking. Funds exist in the car park improvement budget to cover this cost. The costs reflect the specifications agreed by English Heritage and the contract costs we currently have for the delivery of those specifications.
- 5.3 Whilst some general maintenance will be required the "life" of this car park would be expected to be 10 years before any resurfacing is required. General maintenance for Pay & Display surface car parks is already covered by a budget and any general maintenance costs could then justifiably be met from that budget. The estimated cost of these works, based on current prices, is £40,000
- 5.3 The Council operates a Pay and Display car park on St Mary's Lands which offers a 2 hours free period aimed at allowing people to make use of the facilities at St Mary's Lands without the need to pay for parking. Currently income from St Mary's Lands Area 3 is £8,000 from 80 spaces. If the same form of charging / enforcement was introduced at Abbey Fields most swimmers, dog walkers, visitors to the shops and church would be unaffected by the charges.
- 5.4 With 120 spaces at Abbey Fields operating at a much higher capacity than at St Mary's Lands a minimum income of £15,000 a year would be expected. This would give a payback period in 10 years which is longer than we would normally expect for a project of this nature. However, this solution needs to be considered against the current situation where £12,000 a year is being spent to maintain the car park with no income being earned and would need to be reflected in the long term budget strategy.
- 5.5 Income from Abbey Fields swimming pool is currently £225,000 a year. From a sample of 220 customers visiting the leisure centre 72% use the car park. Officers believe that to restrict the capacity of the car park could have an adverse impact on income at the swimming pool. The provision of 2 hours free parking would mean that charges would not impact on the majority of users of the swimming pool. The need to retaining an option for free parking for swimmers is considered essential if the income of the swimming pool (and therefore the Council) is not to be affected.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED

- 6.1 Not to invest any further funding towards the maintenance of the site for parking but to continue to allow vehicles to park there: This was rejected on the

basis that the Council would still be liable for any injuries / damage caused by uneven ground / pot holes. Over a period of time this option would lead to the closure of the area for parking which would be detrimental to the continued provision of swimming at Abbey Fields, the general use of Abbey Fields and the need to support the local economy.

- 6.2 Not to undertake any improvement works and continue to fund the maintenance of the car park which is expected to cost the council in the region of £10,000 a year: This was rejected as a less attractive financial option in comparison to the paid for parking provision identified in 2.1 especially as without the introduction of some form of Pay and Display no income could be generated to offset the ongoing cost of maintenance.
- 6.3 To restrict the area of parking on the site by half, resulting in a much smaller area for parking but reducing costs: Whilst this approach would reduce the adverse impact of parking on the avenue of limes leading to the church (see 7.6) it would significantly reduce the number of parking spaces in the car park with a negative impact on activities in the park and the surrounding area.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 In 2008 agreement was gained from English Heritage to pulverising the existing stone surface, to a depth of 150 – 200mm, mixing in either cement or a cement/pulverised fuel ash (PFA) mixture, reshaping the area, adding water, re compacting the mixture to form a bound base. This base was then double surfaced dressed with a 6mm angular aggregate to provide additional protection. The cost of this work was £36,000.
- 7.2 It was anticipated that this would provide a long term solution to the erosion / damage problems. However less than four years later as a result of the continued run off of water on the site causing continual erosion further work to the parking surface is required. A repair was attempted recently at a cost of £1,500 which has already proved to be unsuccessful. Other minor repairs continue to be required to keep the area safe.
- 7.3 The main problem on the site is the lack of proper drainage. Given the restrictions that are imposed on a scheduled monument site we would require permission from English Heritage to introduce both drainage and a suitable parking surface that will take the wear and tear which takes place on this site.
- 7.4 The area used for parking area at Abbey Fields is “unrestricted” and in constant use with up to 120 cars parked there at any one time during the day including weekends. As a result the ground is under severe pressure and given the restrictions imposed by English Heritage on the kind of surface we can provide the parking area is constantly being repaired in order to maintain a safe environment. A long term solution was therefore required and officers have been in consultation with English Heritage to agree a surface that would be acceptable.
- 7.5 The parking area at Abbey Fields is unregulated with no charges made for parking. There is evidence that some of the vehicles which park there are not related to the facilities at or close to Abbey Fields and that the level of all day parking on the site is increasing which is having a negative impact on the users of those facilities. Some form of parking charges / restrictions could be introduced but that would require the introduction of Pay and Display machines

together with the necessary signage. This would require English Heritage permission.

- 7.6 The parking area used includes an area close to the avenue of lime trees which line the approach to the church. The parking of vehicles close to the trees is having a negative impact on their health of the trees by compacting their roots. By making minor adjustments to the area currently used for parking, undertaking grounds maintenance work around the perimeter of the site including work to several mature trees the number of spaces could be maintained at close to the current levels of around 120.

- 7.7 To deliver the scheme is likely to require the removal of up to three Lime trees at the Eastern end of the avenue, one of which is located in the centre of the existing entrance and one either side.

In addition along the wall bounding Bridge Street there is a Silver Birch and an Oak which are both in serious decline (caused no doubt by cars parking beneath) and ideally would be better removed before the car park is surfaced. Along this wall is also the stump of a Beech which requires grinding out.

There is room to plant replacement trees on the Northern boundary of the car park which would take a couple of trees and room for a tree to replace the Oak which is to be removed on the Eastern boundary by the access/egress.

- 7.8 A number of positive meetings have taken place with representatives from English Heritage to explore developing a scheme that would upgrade the parking surface, provide some drainage and allow for the potential to introduce Pay and Display machines, similar to the scheme already in place at the Bray's car park.
- 7.9 As a result of those meetings a scheme costing £155,000 has been developed which has support from English Heritage. The outstanding matter is the actual make up of the car park surface. It is anticipated that feedback from English Heritage on this particular matter should be received in time to update members at the meeting.
- 7.10 A number of options regarding how the parking area could be managed were discussed with Kenilworth Town Council on 8th September 2011. Whilst no formal motion on Abbey Fields consultation was taken Town Councillors supported the proposals set out in 7.11 / 7.12 in principle with the caveat that 'the devil was in the detail.' The need for further dialogue, notably on business/residential permits was concurred. Other aspects, including the need for extremely careful management of this site, especial regard for residents and church users, the ripple effect of displaced parking (especially by commuters and 'all-day parkers') into other streets, the safeguarding of trees and the wall by High Street plus the provision of disabled/mother/toddler spaces, remain as directly communicated to you at the meeting.
- 7.11 These include the provision of a 2 hour period of "free parking" and the introduction of a maximum stay to prevent all day parking. The need to retaining an option for free parking for swimmers is essential if the income of the swimming pool (and therefore the Council) is not to be effected.

- 7.12 Some form of resident parking permit could also be included to assist those residents living close by who use the area to park as they only have limited on street and no off-street parking provision.