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**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**WEDNESDAY 13 DECEMBER 2017**

**WOOLGATE DECKED PARKING PROPOSAL**

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF ENVIRONMENT AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES**

**(Contact: Claire Locke, Tel: (01993) 861344)**

**1. PURPOSE**

To review the proposal for a partnership venture to construct a decked car park at the Woolgate car park in Witney.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (a) That the Cabinet considers whether it wishes to explore the feasibility of working in partnership with USS to develop a decked car park on the existing Woolgate car park to meet in part, the future parking needs for Witney set out in the Councils Parking Strategy and,
- (b) That the sum of £87,500 be allocated from the Environmental Services Earmarked Reserve to support this feasibility work.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Parking Strategy identified the need for a total of 600 additional off street spaces by 2031 due to the planned development of 4587 new homes in the sub-area (2016 – 2031) which is a 31% increase, as well as an increase in jobs in the town and a reduction in on-street parking.
- 3.2 The Council currently has 1697 spaces across the following car parks:
  - Marriotts Walk 566
  - Woodford Way 263
  - Woolgate 780
  - Windrush leisure centre 88
- 3.3 There is limited scope to increase parking at the Marriotts walk and Windrush sites and the Woodford Way car park is identified for housing development within the emerging Local Pan and therefore unlikely to deliver substantial additional parking capacity on that site.
- 3.4 The Woolgate car park provides the greatest opportunity, currently, to develop additional parking in Witney.
- 3.5 The report on Provision of Additional Parking Capacity (Cabinet 18<sup>th</sup> October 2017 Minute 58 refers) highlighted the need to consider delivery of additional parking in partnership with third parties.

## WOOLGATE PROPOSAL

- 3.6 Canon House Properties Limited acting on behalf of USS, have approached the Council with a proposal for decking part of the Woolgate car park. USS wish to expand the retail units at this site, principally building out from the Waitrose building and it may be feasible to deliver a decked car park as part of development proposals for the site.
- 3.7 **The Council is the freeholder of the site, but much of the site is leased to USS, the exception being the car parking area to the east side.** No decision on the size of any car park or number of spaces has been made at this stage, this proposal is simply a consideration of whether such a development may be feasible and funding options available for it, particularly through S.106 funding or property transactions which may result.
- 3.8 There are a number of planning considerations which would need to be fully considered if development at this location is proposed, as the site sits within a Conservation Area and flood zone and any potential impacts on traffic flow and nearby residents would need to be fully explored.
- 3.9 The concept of retail and parking development in the Town are supported by the Local Plan which identifies future growth needs.
- 3.10 If the Council wishes to explore the feasibility of this development with Canon House & USS it is proposed the following stages are completed:
- Feasibility studies to establish viability including development of scheme drawings, taking account of key considerations relating to town planning, traffic and highways, and commercial viability.
  - Review and preparation of contractual arrangements between the Council and USS, so that a Memorandum of Understanding could be agreed to jointly promote and deliver the scheme.
- 3.11 Once this stage is complete it will be clear whether legal agreement between both parties can be achieved and the initial viability of the scheme will have been explored. At that stage, a detailed report would be submitted to Cabinet/Council to seek agreement to progress to the next stage which would be the full preparation of a planning application. This would require detailed surveys and studies such as transport studies, noise assessments etc. as well as the appointment of an Architect to prepare detailed designs.
- 3.12 If Planning Permission is granted then the final stage would be the construction of the car park. Consideration would need to be given to temporary alternative parking during the construction phase

## 4. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS

The Council could decide not to pursue this proposal and consider other options for additional parking as they come forward, however the Woolgate is likely to be the most viable site for increasing town centre parking provision.

## 5. RISKS

The Council needs to consider the following key risks:

- The commitment of funding to explore feasibility may not result in a viable scheme but a proposal cannot be properly considered without this investment.
- There is a risk that projected costs increase, particularly as there are a large number of unknowns at this stage.
- Delivery of the proposal is reliant on Planning Permission, so there is no guarantee permission would be granted and the scheme could go ahead. Failure to pursue this proposal may result in a missed opportunity to share costs with a developer to secure additional parking for the Town.
- Failure to pursue this proposal may impact on the plans to expand the retail units at the Woolgate, which would boost the local economy and provide local employment.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The cost of delivering the scheme cannot be accurately estimated at this time. Costs will be dependant on multiple factors such as location, design, building materials, size, technology installed, on-going maintenance requirements of design etc. None of these factors have yet been considered.
- 6.2 The estimated cost to the Council for the feasibility work, which forms the Council's initial financial commitment, is £87,500 which can be met from the Environmental Services Earmarked Reserve.

## **7. REASONS**

Protect and enhance the environment of West Oxfordshire and maintain the district as a clean, beautiful place with low levels of crime and nuisance; and be recognised as a leading council that provides efficient, value for money services.

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