

Committee: Environment

Agenda Item

Date: June 17 2008

5

Title: WHITE STREET CAR PARK / DUNMOW TOWN SQUARE

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Item for decision

Summary

1. Great Dunmow Town Council aspires to create a town square on land owned by the District Council. This report explores the impact upon the District Council and the community in relation to provision of car parking.

Recommendations

2. That, Members consider the implications of this project and form a view to guide officers in discussion with the town council in respect of parking issues.
3. That Great Dunmow Town Council is requested to undertake a public consultation and risk assessment on the project in advance of a lease being considered.

Impact

4.

Communication/Consultation	Access group has contributed to this report
Community Safety	There are safety concerns regarding the vehicular access through the square.
Equalities	Blue badge holders will have less favourable parking position than they currently have
Finance	Loss of car parking income
Human Rights	None
Legal implications	A revision of the parking places order would need to be undertaken.
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	Dunmow wards.
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

5. The site proposed for Dunmow Town Square is in ownership of Uttlesford District Council as are the public toilets that are on this site. Any transfer of asset would be a matter for consideration at Finance and Administration Committee.
6. Car parking is the responsibility of Environment Committee and it is appropriate that this issue is considered before any asset related proposal is put before Finance and Administration Committee.
7. White Street car park has recently benefited from development of the eastern sector of Dunmow. There has been pressure from the business community for additional parking space and the recent adjustments have delivered an additional 22 pay and display spaces and 21 season ticket spaces for businesses.
8. This redevelopment of the area includes provision of a new library; this building will face the proposed town square.
9. White Street is a busy long stay car park, the largest serving the town. The route from the car park to the town would take pedestrians through the town square and into the High Street via a pedestrianised White Street next to the Boar's Head.
10. The area the Great Dunmow Town Council has identified is currently provides 9 parking spaces for Blue Badge Holders.
11. To achieve the Great Dunmow Town Councils plan those spaces would need to be relocated, the impact of this would be:
 - A greater distance for disabled persons to walk to get into the town and public toilets.
 - Re designation of parking spaces in the car park for Blue Badge Holders
 - A reduction of 7 pay and display spaces to accommodate the new spaces for Blue Badge Holders.
 - Reduced income (average £650 per space)
 - Blue Badge holders needing to access spaces on a one way system
12. Regard should be given to the concerns of the Councils Access Officer and the Access Group that follow this report, they are keen to point out that their response is not negative but do draw out the need to ensure both legal and community commitments are met.

Risk Analysis

13.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That the views of the community and particularly Blue Badge Holders are not considered.	4	4	That Great Dunmow Town Council undertakes a consultation exercise on this proposal. That Great Dunmow Town Council further considers their proposal to neutralise the impact upon Blue Badge Holders.
The mix of vehicles with pedestrians in the proposed square carries risk.	3	3	That Great Dunmow Town Council carries out a full risk assessment for this project.
That legal challenges will be made.	3	3	The views of the access group are considered. Careful consideration of the outcome of consultation and risk assessment by both councils.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary,

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

Contribution by Access Officer and Access Group.

- The relocation of accessible parking bays, which as confirmed are used throughout the day, will increase the distance that a Blue Badge holder will need to travel to access the High Street and other related areas. This is important when you consider White Street's proximity to the Post Office and the new library.
- If an accessible library is to be opened in that location, should we be providing more accessible car parking spaces? Blue Badges are not only allocated to adults, but also to parents whose children are disabled. There are a number of organisations in Great Dunmow who recognise the needs of parents with disabled children.
- The Blue Badge scheme is currently designed to provide parking for people who are unable to walk, have severe difficulty in walking or are blind. There are a number of other criteria of course, but in this case, the mobility element is the most important as we are asking Blue Badge holders to walk further. If we approve this design, in totally removing accessible parking from this location, we are making it more difficult for disabled members of our community to access services.
- We are not able to provide accessible parking elsewhere which would alleviate this position.
- Uttlesford District Council has responsibilities under its Disability Equality Duty and Scheme to ensure that it promotes equality for and prevents discrimination against disabled people in the community. This is a legal requirement. In addition there could be recourse under the Disability Discrimination Act whereby a member of the public could take action through the small claims court for 'hurt feelings'. Either way there will be bad publicity for the authority who has in essence, agreed to remove its accessible parking, creating a further distance to travel for Blue Badge holders, to create a piazza style square.
- This matter was raised with the Uttlesford Area Access Group and was not found favourable. The Uttlesford Area Access Group has members of the Group who live in Dunmow and surrounding areas who use these parking spaces on a regular basis. They also like the proximity of the parking to the accessible WC facilities. The Access Group took great issue with Stansted Airport Limited when they relocated their accessible parking bays throughout various zones creating longer travelling distances for disabled travellers to reach the Terminal.