

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT – 30th MARCH 2006

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

MULTI-STOREY CAR PARKS

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to inform Committee of the issues associated with the Borough's 4 multi-storey car parks.

BACKGROUND

2. Within the Borough there are 4 multi-storey car parks which are closely allied to the Stourbridge and Halesowen town centres, serving shopping complexes and leisure centres. These car parks offer both short and long stay parking (long stay being restricted to upper floors) and form an essential part of the town centre facilities.
3. Although all 4 multi-storeys are owned by the Council, there are a number of leases and physical links to neighbouring shopping centres, making sale, demolition or re-use somewhat complicated. For example, the Bell Street multi-storey is the only access to the Crown Centre roof top car park.
4. In 2005, the income from all 4 multi-storey car parks totalled £651,317, almost half the car park generated income for 2005. However, a large portion of the revenue budget is absorbed by multi-storey maintenance works. Although in isolation, the budget is more than adequate to maintain 4 multi-storey car parks in an acceptable state of repair, the situation is compounded by the lack of any major refurbishment programme throughout the 80s and 90s. Hence the majority of our revenue budget is directed at addressing structural safety issues.
5. All 4 structures have significant problems in relation to ingress of chlorides to suspended slabs, cladding instability and safety measures for vehicles and pedestrians. From an operational view point, the public tend to link "the multi-storey environment" with vehicle related crime. Although car crime has fallen significantly over recent years, nationally, over 30% of all car crime occurs in car parks. This has led to increasing concern amongst motorists and a general desire to improve car parking security.

Crime Figures on All 4 MSCPs

Car Park	Crime Numbers		% Reduction 2004-2005
	2004	2005	
Ryemarket	4	1	7.50%
Bell Street	16	13	18%
Pool Road	16	15	6%
Precinct	26	17	34%
Total	62	46	
Average Reduction			25%

6. It is important that the future of our multi-storeys is not looked at in isolation, but as part of the parking strategy for the whole Borough. We should also encourage people to consider alternatives to the motor car. Without doubt there is a viable argument to reduce spaces available in town centres, with more of the remaining spaces being designated short stay (less than 4 hours), the emphasis being placed on sustainable public transport. In addition, authorised on-street parking may offer opportunities for the future, including increased revenue. We cannot just remove our parking facilities, we must offer alternatives and this must be fundamental to our future strategy.
7. Over recent years 3 basic strategies have been considered:-
- Sell or lease the car park as a going concern
 - Demolish/sell the car park for potential redevelopment
 - A planned refurbishment programme that will complement the existing annual maintenance allocation, designed to keep the car park operational for at least another 25 years.

The fundamental area that has to be addressed is essential structural repair, as further neglect and lack of attention in this area will certainly lead to closure.

8. In October 1997, a review of multi-storey car parks was undertaken detailing essential works that needed to be prioritised on each car park. Since the review there has been considerable movement in our maintenance programme, tackling of some of the structural issues and the redevelopment of areas around the car parks as detailed in Appendix A.
9. Although both security and environmental improvements are important factors in attracting patrons to our car parks, our priority is addressing structural safety issues and only a limited amount is spent on improving the “multi storey environment”. If our multi-storey car parks can become more inviting to the public, through measures like CCTV, better lighting and graffiti resistant surfaces, then it is likely that our car park revenue will increase.

10. Officers have tried to engage the private sector with a view to selling or leasing the car parks as a going concern on a number of occasions. However, because of their structural condition, age and appearance, any potential 'partner' has been soon put off by the scale of the task and lack of potential.
11. There is no "do nothing" scenario. Our multi-storey car parks will have to close if no major refurbishment is undertaken in the next few years and even closed they still present a liability.
12. Our current strategy is dependent on the redevelopment of Bell Street Car Park, Stourbridge and precinct Car Park, Halesowen. With the removal of the need for extensive remedial works on two multi-storey car parks sufficient capacity will be available in the improvement budget to allow comprehensive refurbishment works to be undertaken on Pool Road Car Park, Halesowen and Ryemarket Car park, Stourbridge. By improving the Parking Environment car park patronage will grow, making the two remaining car parks sustainable.

FINANCE

13. Car park improvements are funded from the Capital Car Parks Improvement Fund that supports improvement works to the major car parks.

LAW

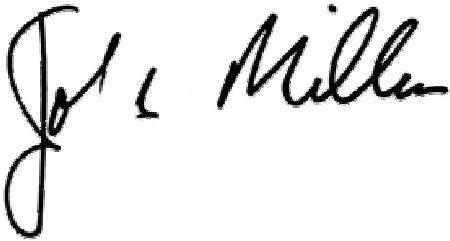
14. The Council provides off street parking under the provisions of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.
15. Maintenance and repair of these off street parking facilities is an incidental function under the provisions of Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972.
16. The requirements of the Occupiers Liability Acts 1957 and 1984 are basically that an occupier of premises must ensure that they are not in a condition which could cause personal injury or death to visitors or trespassers.

EQUALITY IMPACT

17. This report takes into account the Council's policy in respect of equality and diversity of the service and recruitment of personnel. A safe and secure parking environment impacts on all car park patrons including children and young people.

RECOMMENDATION

18. That Committee note the content of this report and support the current progress being made relating to MSCP redevelopment and refurbishment.



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Background documents used in the preparation of this report:-

- Multi-Storey Car Park Report to Chief Officers' Group - October 1997
- Review of Bell Street Multi-Storey Car Parks (Faber Maunsell 2003)
- Bell Street Car Park Report to Cabinet - November 2005
- Cornbow Centre, Halesowen Report to Cabinet - September 2005

1. BELL STREET MULTI-STOREY CAR PARK, STOURBRIDGE

Total No. Spaces:

Bell Street MSCP = 438

Crown Centre Roof = 135

Total = 573

2005 Pay and Display Income = £193,996*

This car park at present serves Stourbridge Town Centre and provides the main, direct parking provision for the Crystal Leisure Centre and additionally the Crown Centre. There are problems with deteriorated concrete deck slabs. The roof top car park to the Crown Centre is reliant upon the existing 3rd floor access bridge, with pedestrian access also provided at 3rd, 4th and 5th level. Access to the Crown Centre cannot be provided any other way, utterly restricting potential redevelopment and possible change of use of the multi-storey site.

Following completion of a Structural Appraisal, the then Executive was informed in July 2004 that refurbishment of Bell Street Car Park, to give a further life of 30 years, would cost £2m, it was agreed that design and preparation of documents should proceed on this basis. A detailed brief was agreed with the consultants to take on board structural and environmental improvements.

Based on experience with cathodic protection (the preferred structural protection system) on a similar car park refurbishment which they had just completed, revised costings prepared by the consultants have shown that the likely cost of the full refurbishment is now approximately £4m. At this level of cost the preferred option is no longer sustainable and an alternative strategy is required.

Against the background of potential redevelopment opportunities and the master planning associated with Stourbridge, it is considered that a strategy that seeks to replace the car park in the short-term is now necessary. This will be the subject of a future report.

A structural risk assessment, taking on board structural deterioration, has been undertaken and this indicates that, with some temporary measures and repairs, the car park can be maintained as usable in the short term. In addition, a monitoring regime will carry out inspections to ensure continued structural integrity. The estimated cost is £130,000 over 3 years, which can be met from resources earmarked for car park improvements.

The initial works are now being carried out by Wrekin Construction and will be completed in early 2006/07.

The provisions of an Agreement dated the 8th February 1982 are very clear and specific. The Council is required, at its own expense, to keep the Bell Street multi-storey car park and the Crown Centre roof top car park, together with vehicular and pedestrian/trolley bridge links, open and available for public use at all times during the period commencing

1 hour before the start of and terminating 1 hour after the end of trading of the retail units in the Crown Centre.

The car parking facilities are inextricably linked to the shops in the Crown Centre and it would not be possible to reduce these facilities without there being a breach of this Agreement.

However, if a complete redevelopment of the site was mutually agreed between all interested parties, this would prove an ideal solution.

2. RYEMARKET MULTI-STOREY CAR PARK, STOURBRIDGE

Total No. Spaces: = 415

2005 Pay and Display Income = £130,746*

Ryemarket car park provides the main parking provision to the adjacent Ryemarket Shopping Centre.

Work has continued on the structural refurbishment of this car park and in 1998, at a cost of £75,000, all of the GRC cladding panels on the west and east side were removed and hand railing provided where necessary. This has left a somewhat austere building as in the present financial situation funds for upgrading the concrete finish have not yet been made available. Continued deterioration of the panels lead to the need to complete the GRC cladding panel removal and this work has been carried out in 2005/06 at a cost of £95,000.

The twin lifts were refurbished in 2005/06 at a cost of £60,000. This work saw the replacement of the lift control unit, new carriage doors and the installation of DDA compliant passenger controls.

There still remains the problem of the “temporary” plastic mesh which offers protection to the glass café area in the adjacent centre. This requires regular maintenance and is unattractive.

The main waterproofing problems, i.e. re-coating to the top floors and the first car park floors were completed in 2003/04 at a total cost of £270,000 and it is proposed to continue with the floor refurbishment as funds allow.

The existing headroom restrictions and “split level” design of the multi-storey car park make any reuse for some other purpose extremely problematic not to mention very expensive. The Council would be in breach of covenant if the parking facilities are reduced to a level below that which existed when the freehold reversion was sold in 1984.

It would not be physically possible to provide replacement parking in close proximity to the Centre.

Over recent years the Ryemarket “parking environment” has improved dramatically and with continued investment, this improvement should continue, prolonging the life of the car park, at the same time encouraging more people to use the facility.

3. PRECINCT MULTI-STOREY CAR PARK, HALESOWEN

Total No. Spaces: = 400

2005 Pay and Display Income = £152,757*

From a design perspective the Precinct multi-storey is perhaps the least attractive of all four car parks, being both austere and uninviting. The general condition of the car park is once again poor, but with no significant structural defects.

The car park is located behind the Cornbow Centre and Hagley Road shops, not having a prominent frontage but linked via walkways to the Cornbow Centre and Library.

Redevelopment of the Shopping Centre together with the upgrading of the bus station is now imminent. The proposals include the demolition and redevelopment of the car park.

Whilst there are problems with the car park it is proposed to only carry out essential repairs within the interim period to ensure the safety of patrons until the car park is demolished and redevelopment takes place within the next two years.

4. POOL ROAD MULTI-STOREY CAR PARK, HALESOWEN

Total No. Spaces: = 370

2005 Pay and Display Income = £173,819

Pool Road car park has a prominent profile onto Queensway and the pedestrianised Hagley Street area. The car park is attached to retail premises via an access to the Cornbow Hall above them.

The car park features a distinctive “carousel” arrangement at the Pool Road end enabling vehicles to exist the car park.

Pool Road car park has had ongoing rewiring and lighting programmed over the last 3 years to replace the existing worn out lighting with a new system conforming to current regulations. The cost to date is £25,000 with a further expenditure of £12,000 in 2006/07 to complete the project.

The car park is in reasonable condition but has had only minor refurbishment carried out over the last few years. With the removal of the need for extensive remedial works on Bell Street and Precinct car parks it is envisaged that a complete refurbishment of this car park can take place, making the most of its prominent position and importance to the Town Centre.

**All figures inclusive of VAT*