

CABINET

15 October 2003

NEW PARK AND RIDE CAR PARK, BAR END, WINCHESTER

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Contact Officer: Alan Jowsey Tel No: 01962 848232

RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The County Council is funding the provision of a new Park and Ride car park at Bar End that will accommodate about 420 cars. It is proposed that the City Council should enter into a legal agreement to lease the new car park from the County Council for a period of 10 years, and that the two existing Park and Ride car parks should be included within the same agreement.

The report also considers the two petitions received at the Council Meeting on 23 July 2003 objecting to the provision of the new car park by the County Council, and considers the need to enhance the Park and Ride bus service to include the new car park.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That the City Council enters into a legal agreement to lease the new and existing Park and Ride car parks from the County Council for a period of 10 years subject to details to be approved by the City Secretary and Solicitor.
- 2 That the City Council enters into an agreement with the contractor for improvements to the Park and Ride bus service as set out in this report.
- 3 That it be recommended to Council that Miss Edmondstone and Mr Weeks be thanked for the presentation of their respective petitions on this matter and informed that the Council has considered all the points they raised, but adheres to its decision to support the Park and Ride extension.

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### DETAIL:

#### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 In July 2003, construction commenced on the new Park and Ride car park site at Bar End. The works should be completed by mid-December 2003 although some of the additional spaces will be available at an earlier date as works progress. There will be approximately 420 car parking spaces provided within the new car park. Members will be aware that construction has been delayed by objections to the proposed car park and the petition received at the Council Meeting on 23 July 2003 covers matters which have already considered through the appropriate planning and legal procedures.
- 1.2 The existing two Park and Ride car parks are leased by the City Council from the County Council, and the City Council provides the Park and Ride bus service and manages the car parks. The City Council receives the income from the Pay and Display machines located in the car parks to cover part of the costs involved, with the remaining costs met from income received from the town centre car parks.

#### 2 Lease of Car Parks

- 2.1 The existing Park and Ride car parks are leased from the County Council on a 2 year agreement which involves unnecessary time and legal costs in preparing a new agreement every 2 years. This allowed for evolving changes within the Park and Ride operation, but with the new site in operation it is anticipated that there will now be a stable situation for several years. It is therefore proposed that the lease for the new and existing sites should be for a period of 10 years with the option for either side to terminate the agreement with suitable notice if circumstances change.
- 2.2 The proposed lease specifies the financial responsibility of each party. The County Council is responsible for the costs of all work to construct the new car park and the adjoining amenities building, except for the provision of the pay and display machines which is the responsibility of the City Council. The City Council will then become responsible for all costs relating to maintenance of the operational area including the ticket machines, enforcement, surface and landscaping maintenance, cleaning of public toilets, and business rates. The City Council will also be responsible for providing the Park and Ride bus service, and all these costs will be offset by the income received by the City Council from the pay and display machines. The County Council will retain responsibility for managing the areas of woodland and open space that surround the operational area of the new car park.
- 2.3 The proposed lease of the new and existing sites is otherwise comparable to the existing lease and does not require any rental payment by the City Council to the County Council.
- 2.4 The City Secretary and Solicitor has published formal notice of proposals to make a Car Park Order covering the extension to the Park and Ride car park and revoking the existing order. Apart from including the new extension the proposed Order does

not make any significant changes. Any objections received to the proposed Order will be reported to Cabinet on 5 November 2003.

### 3 Park and Ride Bus Service

- 3.1 There are three problems currently being experienced by the Park and Ride bus service. The buses on some morning peak journeys are now running at maximum capacity, there are difficulties keeping to the timetable during both the morning and evening peak periods, and there have been complaints about the off-peak journeys being very lightly used.
- 3.2 The opening of the new site will have an impact on all three issues. The extra car park capacity will increase the level of bus usage during the morning peak, and the extra car park will require slightly more running distance for each circuit by the buses making the existing timetable even more difficult to adhere to. At present there is minimal usage of the Park and Ride buses during the off-peak period since the existing Park and Ride car parks are full by about 09.00. The opening of the new site should result in spare capacity during the off-peak period and it is anticipated that there will be an increase in car park turnover and the usage of the off-peak buses.
- 3.3 At present the contractor has 3 buses operating a 10 minutes frequency during the peak periods and 2 buses operating a 15 minutes frequency during off-peak periods. There is also a spare bus available to the same specification as the 3 buses regularly used on the service except that it does not have the Park and Ride logos. The contractor has been asked to provide an indication of the additional costs of operating 4 buses during the peak periods and/or 3 buses during the off-peak periods for the period until the present contract ends in October 2004. The approximate costs will be £45k per annum for the peak periods and £35k per annum for the off-peak period.
- 3.4 The capacity and timetable problems are being experienced during the peak periods and it is therefore considered that the priority is to provide an additional vehicle during the peak periods. This will enable the frequency to be slightly reduced from every 10 minutes to every 8 or 9 minutes while allowing for the extra running time around the new site. The price also provides for the morning peak period to be extended from the existing 07.30-09.00 to 07.15-09.15 to provide extra capacity while the longer evening peak period remains at 16.00-18.30. Usage reduces significantly after 18.00 and it is not considered that there is any justification at present for providing a later evening service when usage would be minimal. It is considered that the off-peak service should remain as existing with the off-peak usage being kept under review after the new site is opened. Another option would be to extend the bus service to include the hospital and other employers on Romsey Road. This has been discussed with hospital representatives and it is not considered that the service would attract a significant number of hospital staff. There would be major disadvantages to existing Park and Ride users due to the longer route and the probability of more congestion during peak periods. Both the above options are significant changes to the existing contract that expires in October 2004. It is recommended that both options should be considered further as part of the retendering process next year.

### 4 Consideration of Matters Raised in the Petitions

- 4.1 The Petitions from Miss Edmondstone and Mr Weeks are attached as Appendix 1. Comments on the points raised are set out below.

- 4.2 The new Park and Ride car park is a County Council project that has been designed, constructed and financed by the County Council. The City Council is not, therefore, in a position to stop the work on the extension, even if it were minded to, as this is the subject of a contract between the County Council and the contractor. The City Council has supported provision of the Park & Ride extension, but the majority of matters raised in the petitions are matters for the County Council, which has received a similar deputation. The key matters to which the petitioners seek a response are addressed below.
- 4.3 **Robert Key Letter.** The letter referred to is attached at Appendix 2. It was in response to correspondence from Winchester's then MP, Gerry Malone raising concerns expressed by a constituent. It stated that the requirement to grass over the Bypass would be 'fully honoured'. It also refers to an earlier request from the City and County Councils for the former bypass at Bar End to be retained because it may be needed for park and ride use. The then Minister rejected this request on the basis that it was a condition of the planning consent for the M3 that the bypass must be removed and the site restored to countryside.
- 4.4 Subsequent to the Robert Key letter, the Minister for Local Transport and Road Safety, Steven Norris, wrote to the County Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1995 (see Appendix 2). This was in response to the County Council's request for permission to submit a planning application for the Park & Ride extension on Department of Transport land (the former Bypass). It will be noted that the Minister gave the necessary consent in that letter, whilst wishing to see 'the benefits and drawbacks of the proposal to be considered fully within the planning system'. This has now, of course, been done through the planning application and public inquiry (at which the constituent referred to in Robert Key's letter was a participant) and the proposal has also been subject to scrutiny by the Courts. The letter also noted that a decision on the sale of the land would be a different issue: the Department of Transport has since sold the land to the County Council for Park & Ride use.
- 4.5 **Future of Winchester Study/Local Agenda 21.** The petitioners ask the Council to reaffirm the consultative processes contained in the Future of Winchester Study and Local Agenda 21. There was indeed extensive consultation on the Future of Winchester Study, although it is a Study undertaken to inform the Local Plan Review, not a policy document in its own right. Nevertheless, its conclusions and recommendations (Chapter 7) include: 'most commuting and tourist (long stay) parking could be relocated to Park and Ride/Rail/Walk/Cycle sites on the outskirts of the City' (paragraph 7.7) and 'expand Park & Ride by re-locating commuter City centre parking to the City outskirts' (paragraph 7.15). The City Council does not have a Local Agenda 21 Strategy. Its Environmental Charter does not refer specifically to consultation, but does 'encourage a cleaner, safer and more balanced transport system through the promotion of public transport, traffic management schemes and improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists'.
- 4.6 There has been extensive consultation on this proposal through the planning process, and the objections that have been raised have been addressed through the appropriate procedures. The County Council has also consulted widely on the Local Transport Plan, the Winchester Movement and Access Plan and on Park & Ride provision in Winchester. This has shown strong public support for the expansion of park and ride in Winchester, including at Bar End, (as did the consultation on the Future of Winchester Study).

- 4.7 **Alternative Sites.** Alternative sites were considered at the public inquiry into the planning application, and the County Council Depot was one of 4 alternative sites considered at Bar End. These was the subject of evidence submitted to the inquiry by the local authorities, which concluded that the HCC Depot had operational and practical problems that made it less suitable than the former Bypass land. The Inspector concluded that 'in the case of the Council Depot it would be operationally inferior to the current proposals'. The Secretary of State agreed with the Inspector that 'the alternative sites considered at the Inquiry were either not feasible, or would cause delay to the extension of the present facilities'.
- 4.8 **Future Development.** There are no long-term visions or current plans for built development between the built-up area at Bar End and the M3. The policies for the area are clearly set out in the Local Plan, which applies countryside policies. There are no representations on the Local Plan that seek the development of land outside the policy boundary in this part of Winchester, and therefore no likelihood of the settlement boundary being extended. The City Council has a record of strongly resisting the extension of the built-up area in this part of the town, for example by resisting proposals to develop Bar End playing fields. There are no proposals for industrial development on the former Bypass site or elsewhere at Bar End outside the policy boundary of Winchester.
- 4.9 The surface water drainage measures employed for the site follow best practice for car parks whether they be Park & Ride or any other type. The site incorporates large hard-surfaced areas and has been designed to cope with heavy rainfall (50mm/hour), as would be the case with any such development nationally. The site is drained via French drains to concrete ring soakaways. The drainage is normal for such a facility where there is a preponderance of pedestrian (in this case mainly female) pedestrian movements. There are no plans to develop the land further.

## 5 Conclusion

- 5.1 Members will be aware that construction of the new car park is now nearly complete. The request in both petitions that the City Council should ask the County Council to cease work on the site and reinstate it as countryside is based on issues that have been examined in detail, through the planning, political and legal processes. It is recommended that the receipt of the petitions be noted but that the Council reaffirms its support for the Park & Ride extension and agrees to the recommendations regarding the site lease and bus provision improvements set out in this report.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

### 6 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

- 6.1 A key priority is to promote environmentally friendly lifestyles through the promotion of greener transport strategies.

### 7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 The costs of operating the new Park and Ride site and the additional cost of £45k per annum to operate the upgraded peak periods Park and Ride bus service will both be offset by the additional income from the new car park. The existing contract for the bus service currently costs approx. £244k per annum. If an upgraded off-peak service is also considered, there would be a further additional cost of £35k per annum.

## 7.2

- 7.3 It is anticipated that there may about 25% occupancy of the car park initially generating an income of about £40k per annum but this should rise rapidly over a 2 or 3 year period to reach 100% occupancy generating an income of about £160k per annum. The shortfall while occupancy increases can be met from the car parking reserve budget.

### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

1. Lease of car parks from Hampshire County Council dated 7 July 2002

### APPENDICES:

1. Copies of petitions from Mr A Weeks and Ms E Edmondstone
2. Copies of letters from Robert Key MP (17.1.94) and Steven Norris (22.6.95) relating to reinstatement of Winchester Bypass