



Full Council 14th June 2022

Report Title; Proposals for St John's and Coppice Car Parks

Submitted by; Car Park Working Group

1. Approval

To approve the recommendations outlined below.

2. Background Information

1. In 2020 Belper town council began being charged Business Rates for both car parks. The charge was backdated to 2017 under Regulations brought in in 2013. This has resulted in an ongoing cost to the town of £27,445 p.a with the likelihood of increase. The total backdated costs have been approximately £80k.
2. There has traditionally been no charge for use of the Coppice Car Park, allowing users to be able to leave vehicles there indefinitely.
3. In light of the climate change emergency announced by the town, this is an unsustainable position. It is recognised that free parking encourages increased use of cars, leading to increases in air pollution and traffic congestion. It discourages the use of public transport, walking or cycling.
4. Informal consultations with local residents and representatives of the business community have shown no great objection to changing the pattern of managing the car parks. Residents living around the car parks would wish to have some kind of permit parking to protect their position in the future. Businesses felt that costs needed to be covered and that some consideration for their employees would be welcome but they recognised that the current unmanaged situation was not adding economic value to their businesses. They offered some interesting ideas as to how to mitigate costs.
5. It has been claimed that no charges can be made for the Coppice Car Park due to historic improvements funded by the Derby and Derbyshire Economic Partnership and the Heritage Lottery Fund. This was part of the Townscape Heritage Initiative started in 1998 which led to a significant investment in the town of over £2m. The Coppice Car Park resurfacing was a small part of this; approximately £120k came from heritage funding and £28,900 was funded by the town council. According to correspondence held by BTC in their records, any constraints on car park charging had lapsed by 2010. By 2011 the HLF had waived all interest in charging fees as long as any monies were reinvested for the benefit of the town. According to Companies House the DDEP was dissolved in 2011 and therefore no longer exists.

6. It is likely that the two sites will require different solutions. The St John's Car Park has issues related to off road parking, traffic management and enabling the safe use of St Johns Rd by residents and through traffic.

7. A Coppice Car Park solution is needed to protect the position of local residents who have nowhere else to park. Consideration should be given to the parking needs of local workers and more use of short-term parking to encourage use by shoppers and visitors.

3. Legislation and Reasons for the Recommendations

8. There are two issues. The first is to make sure that the two sites are being managed on a proper statutory basis. The second is to decide how they should be best managed and in particular whether, given the Business Rate cost, there should be a properly formalised basis for charging, which can also include provision for electric vehicles. Amber Valley District Council has been of some initial assistance but requires a clear commitment by the town council to move forward. It may also be necessary to consult with Derbyshire Country Council as traffic authority for the county.

9. It is usual for off-street car parks to be regulated by an order under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. Consultation with DALC has not identified any other town council with similar provision as in Belper.

10. If BTC is to move to a system of enforceable charging (with authority for electric vehicle points) then a properly organised and legally valid arrangement is required so as to

- a] confirm the statutory basis for the town car parks
- b] secure a properly authorised basis for charging (including for the provision of electric vehicle points)
- c] allow for a residents' parking permit system
- d] ensure a legally sound basis for enforcement and the removal of abandoned vehicles

4. Financial Implications

11. At present none of this can be costed because enquiries made with AVBC have shown they need to see serious intent on the part of BTC to proceed with a proper plan. Without this they will not enter into detailed discussions about the legal arrangements and costs nor any agreement to use their existing parking service to manage enforcement.

5. Recommendations

1. That the council commits to a full investigation of the basis on which car parking is to be retained at the St John's and Coppice sites

2. That the council commits, in principle, to seeking a new basis for charging on both sites, to include electric vehicle points and provision for residents

3. That the council agree to consult further with AVBC and DCC on these issues and to obtain costings from AVBC for legal fees to assist BTC in securing the appropriate order or other means of regulation and to enter into a discussion about using AVBC enforcement services.

4. That the working group continue to work up detailed proposals as to the form of regulation, the cost of permits and charges, the provision of EVC points and an overall management plan for the 2 sites

5. That a further report with positive recommendations and costings be provided after discussions with AVBC and DCC