

Executive : 18 June 2008

Parking Strategy

Report of Strategic Director – Joy Wishlade

(This matter is the responsibility of Cllr Horsley.)

Executive Summary

Parsons Brinkerhoff have now updated the Taunton Parking Strategy Review with more realistic timescales for the closure of the town centre car parks which are included in the Project Taunton regeneration areas. There are two main consequences to this work both of which are dealt with within this report. The first consequence is on the availability of parking for Taunton and the second is on the effect on the income stream for Taunton Deane Borough Council.

1 Background

- 1.1 Parsons Brinkerhoff were asked to update the Taunton Parking Strategy Review taking into account the updated estimates of the timing of closures of town centre car parks within the Project Taunton regeneration areas. Some of these timings may yet change, but it was agreed that in order to produce a strategy we needed to agree on the best available estimate. The following table summarises the revised predictions for the years when the car parks will be fully closed.

Car Park	Predicted year of closure	Current capacity	Unused spaces	Number of used spaces lost	
				Commuters	Shoppers / Visitors
Old Gas Works	2007	350	151	150	50
Private SCC Car Park	2007	60	0	60	0
Castle Green	2009	64	0	0	64
Greenbrook Terrace	2009	155	31	34	90
Livestock Market	2009	95	35	60	0
Coal Orchard	2012	198	0	25	173
Crescent	2012	243	0	0	243
Cricket Ground	2012	200	42	105	53
High Street	2012	276	36	35	205
Old Market Centre	2012	600	120	168	312
Priory Bridge Road	2012	464	357	41	66
Tangier	2012	246	0	178	68
Castle Street	2015	76	0	42	34
Enfield	2015	188	51	97	40
TOTAL	-	3215	822	995	1398

- 1.2 It should be noted that 64 spaces of the Coal Orchard car park were closed in 2007, leaving the capacity to be 134 spaces. The car park will close fully in 2012. 46 spaces of the Castle Street car park will close in 2009. The remainder of which will close in 2015. 60 spaces of the Enfield car park will close in 2009. The remainder of which will close in 2015.
- 1.3 The redistribution of parked vehicles from the car park closures has been analysed by simply assuming that the 'unused' spaces in the town centre will be utilised by vehicles that usually park in the car parks that are proposed to be closed. No allowance has been made for different car park charges or for the unused spaces being in an alternative location. In addition, no allowance has been made for modal shift. It is estimated that the parked vehicles redistributed by the car park closures in 2007 and 2009 could be accommodated at the remaining car parks that have 'unused' spaces. A shortfall in town centre parking spaces would only come into effect in 2012. This is shown on Appendix Figure 1.
- 1.4 The private car park on Castle Street used by Somerset County Council employees is a free car park. It has been assumed that vehicles which usually park at this car park will not redistribute to public car parks with parking charges. Therefore Appendix 1 shows a shortfall of 60 spaces in 2007 due to the closure of this car park.

2. Parking Proposals

- 2.1 The car park improvement proposals have been assumed to be the same as described in the document *Taunton Parking Strategy Review (2007)*, apart from the following assumptions:
 - 1500 parking spaces will be provided at the new multi-storey car park on Paul Street when it opens in 2015;
 - Cambria Farm Park & Ride site will provide 1000 spaces when it is completed in 2010;
 - 400 temporary parking spaces will be provided in the town centre during the years 2012, 2013 and 2014 while the new Paul Street multi-storey car park is being constructed.

Appendix Figure 2 shows the impact of the increased parking provision from the parking improvement proposals. It can be seen that from 2015 onwards the parking supply in Taunton will exceed the 2005 parking demand for shoppers/short-stay visitors.

Appendix Figure 3 compares the predicted parking supply with the future parking demand assumptions, as described in Section 4 of the *Taunton Parking Strategy Review*. It can be seen that in 2021 the shortfall in parking spaces for shoppers/visitors will be 583 in comparison with the future parking demand. In comparison with the future parking provision (allowing for 15% vacant operational spaces), the shortfall in 2021 will be 1287 spaces. The

provision of commuter parking spaces will exceed the future commuter parking demand throughout the study period.

3. Conclusions

- 3.1 Under the current phasing plan there is sufficient car parking for both commuters and shoppers until 2012 (not taking into account either estimated parking growth or modal shift patterns, which potentially might balance themselves out).
- 3.2 A temporary solution for the years when the development of the retail area is taking place needs to be found. Phasing of the closure of the multi storeys will need to be considered within the development plan.
- 3.3 The phasing of the developments on each site need to be considered in the light of the impact of parking. For example we will need to consider whether all the Tangier sites are put on hold for development until post 2015.
- 3.4 The building of a further car park (perhaps on one of the Tangier sites) needs to be considered for 2015 onwards

4. Impact on income for Taunton Deane Borough Council

- 4.1 The assessment of the Parking Manager on the predicted closure plan in this report is that income from car parking in Taunton will remain stable until 2012. However, at this point, if all these closures take place at once the worst case scenario is an ongoing loss of income to TDBC of £1.2 million per annum. This is clearly unsustainable.
- 4.2 The worst case scenario includes the following assumptions
 - That there is no income to TDBC from the parking that is created within the new retail development.
 - That none of the income from the developments is ring-fenced and invested in other ways to give TDBC an on-going income stream.

5. Options

- 5.1 The inevitable conclusion will be for TDBC to build further car parks and take the income from them. A ring of new multi storey car parks is what was envisaged at the start of the Vision for Taunton. There are a number of reasons why this is not the inevitable answer:
 - We require shopper spaces. With the exception of the area for the retail development (which will include car parking) all the other sites within TDBC's ownership lie too far away to be classed as shopper car parks. However, it may still be an option that we will need to consider.
 - The cost of a new multi storey is anywhere in the region of £10m - £20m. TDBC would need to use prudential borrowing to be able to invest this amount. The income from the car park would essentially only repay the loan rather than bring an income in.

- A further suggestion is to get in a private operator to build and manage a new car park. Work done by Atkins has shown that most private operators are only interested in managing rather than building car parks. If they were required to make this investment, they would want evidence of demand and would want to manage the majority of the stock to ensure that they could control the pricing and thus reduce the risk to their investment.
- 5.2 The development appraisals of the retail area to date have shown that these are only viable if the developer takes the income from parking. However, we are now looking at a much larger area for the development which will mean that the financial appraisals may look very different. As part of the brief to developers it will need to be made clear that one of the objectives will be to ensure that TDBC receives as much as possible of the parking income. This objective will need to be tested to see if it is feasible. In the meantime, to assume that there is no return of income is the correct assumption.
- 5.3 In order to give an on-going income to TDBC of £1.2m will require an investment in property of approximately £24m on a low risk type of investment. There are a number of options we could take:
- Taunton Deane has a property portfolio which could be used to generate further income. This would be mainly via sales of pieces of land for development and re-investing the money in property that would bring an income. For example we could invest in the retail scheme so that TDBC can retain the income from the car park.
 - We could use some of the sites in Project Taunton differently than envisaged to bring in the highest receipt rather than achieving our current objective of employment development.
 - An interest in a completed building on Firepool could be taken to give an ongoing income rather than taking the receipt. This would need to be assessed at the time as it might have an effect on further investment in delivering the vision.
 - A further option is to look at who and when we charge for parking. This will not solve the income problem but will help.
 - The final (and unpalatable) option is not to go forward with Project Taunton, and in particular the retail development. The consequence of this decision is serious. With the housing growth that Taunton will take during this period (up to 2026) and without a improved and increased retail offer, Taunton faces the risk of its town centre slowly degenerating. It will also become increasingly difficult to attract the major employers into Taunton and this puts the Firepool development at risk in the longer term.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The options outlined in 5.2 and 5.3 need to be explored. The strategy to use some of our current assets to produce income for the future is challenging as it will mean that the funds released will have to be ring fenced for this purpose and not used to meet other Council priorities. The Delivery team also need to work on the objectives for the retail development so that we can go to the

market with the brief and from there assess what the real impact on the parking income will be. This will be subject to a further report later in the year.

7. Financial implications:

- 7.1 The financial implications for the regeneration of Taunton using its current car parks is very significant. The loss of £1.2m per annum as the worst case scenario equates to approximately 8.8% of the Council's net spend / budget before contributions from central government and business rates. It also represents 22.7% of the amount raised from Council Tax. This is clearly not sustainable. The choices are to either replace this income from current assets or to significantly scale down the Project Taunton regeneration programme.

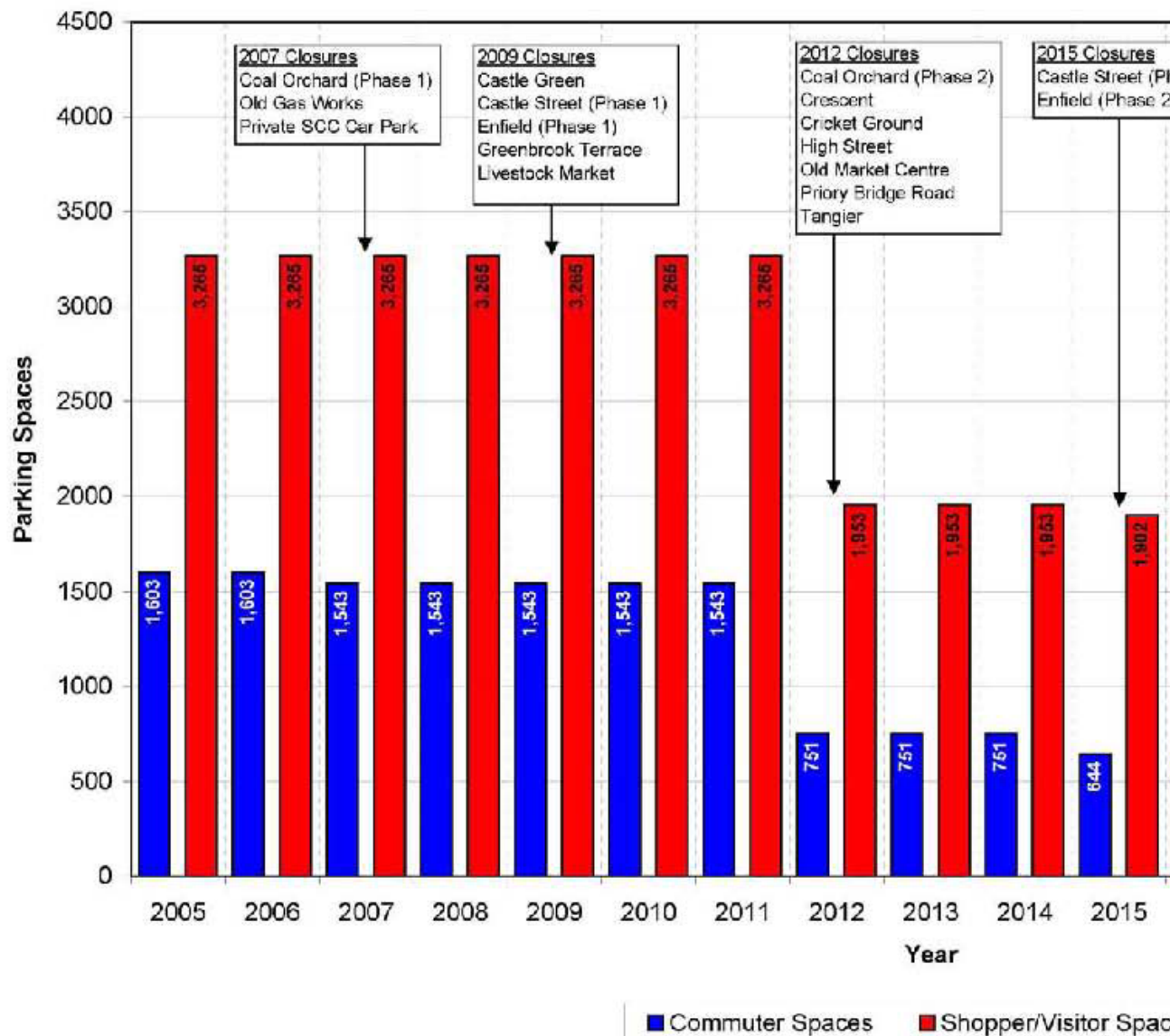
8. Recommendations

1. That the Project Taunton Delivery Team prepares a brief for the retail development, for approval by the Executive, so that the assumptions around viability can be tested.
2. That the Delivery Team in conjunction with the Property section of TDBC, and as part of the asset management of the Council, prepare a list of sites in the current ownership of TDBC that could be developed and the income ring fenced for re-investment to cover the shortfall in parking income in the future for discussion with Members.
3. That phasing and the impact on car parking is considered as each site is brought forward.
4. That the Delivery team actively explore the opportunity for putting a new multi storey car park in the Tangier area.

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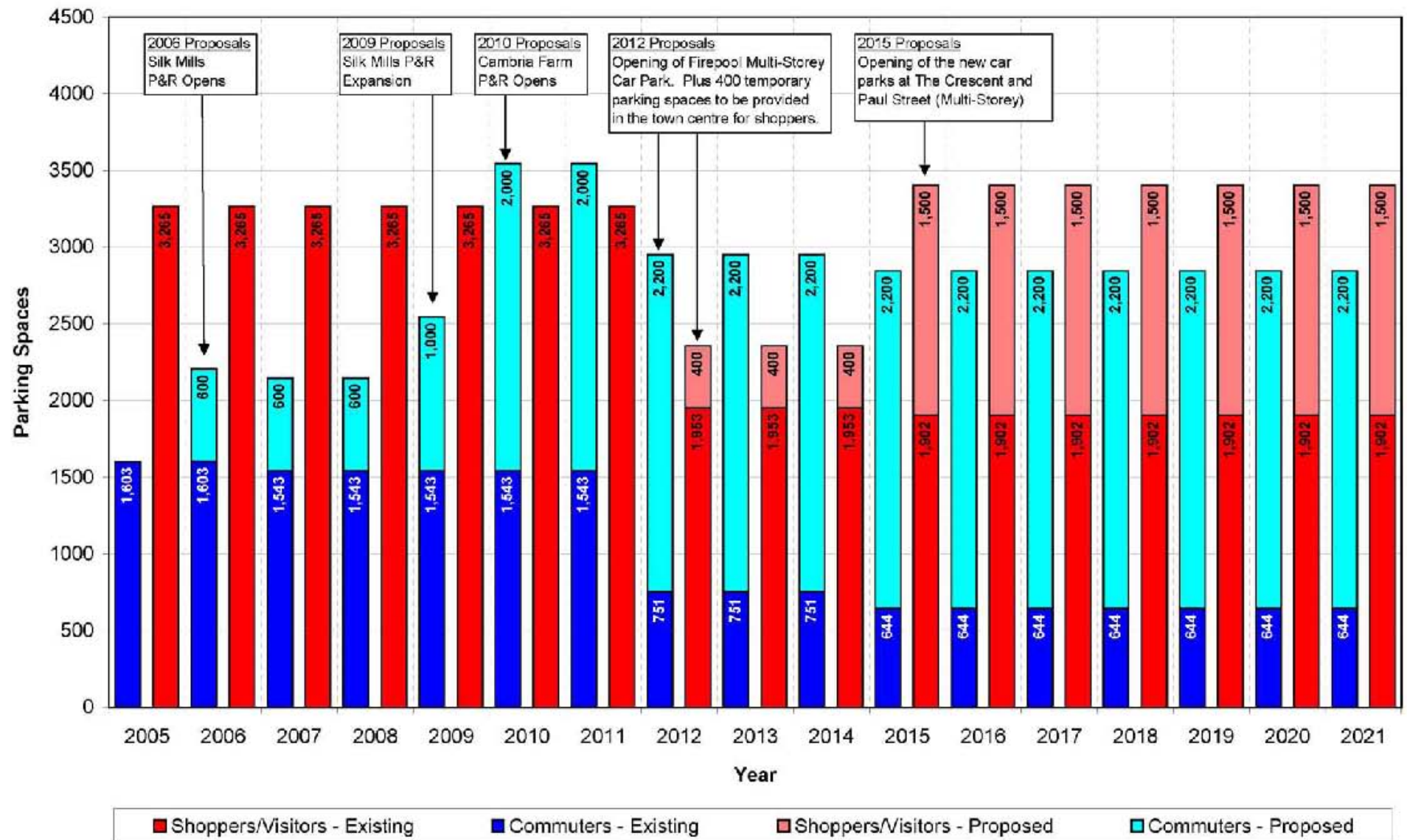
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IMPACT OF CAR PARK CLOSURES ON THE TOWN CENTRE PARKING CURRENTLY USED TAKING PARKING RE-DISTRIBUTION INTO ACCOUNT



**IMPACT OF CAR PARK CLOSURES AND CAR PARK IMPROVEMENT PROPOSALS
ON THE TOWN CENTRE PARKING SPACES CURRENTLY USED**

FIGURE 2



**IMPACT OF CAR PARK CLOSURES AND CAR PARK IMPROVEMENT PROPOSALS ON THE
PARKING SPACES CURRENTLY USED (WITH ESTIMATED PARKING GROWTH)**

FIGURE 3

