
Cabinet Member for City Services

15th August 2016

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for City Services – Councillor J Innes

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director of Place

Ward(s) affected:

St Michael's

Title:

Part Closure of Cox Street Car Park – Objection

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to consider the formal objection received to the part closure of Cox Street Car Park.

Cabinet and Council report of the 9th and 23rd February 2016 respectively, approved the partial disposal of the surface car park for the development of up to 1000 bed student housing.

Following the selection of the preferred developer, the formal closure procedure commenced with public notices inviting written objections to the part closure. One formal objection was received requiring Cabinet Member consideration and public determination.

Due to the timescale for dealing with this matter and in accordance with Paragraph 19 of the City Council's Constitution, Councillor J McNicholas, the nominee of the Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, has been invited to attend the meeting for the consideration of this matter to agree the need for urgency such that call-in arrangements will not apply. The reason for the urgency being that, to enable the first phase of the development to open for the academic year commencing September 2017, a planning application needs to be submitted in early September 2016 for consideration at Planning Committee on 29 September 2016. If the application is not submitted in time then the programme of works will be delayed and the timescales for opening will not be achievable.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for City Services is recommended to:-

- 1) Consider the objection lodged regarding the part closure of the car park.

- 2) Reject the objection and allow the car park closure procedure and the development to continue.
- 3) Inform the objector in writing of the decision arrived at.

List of Appendices included:

- Appendix A - Site Plan
- Appendix B - Copy of the advert and site notices
- Appendix C - Statement of reasons as to why the closure is required
- Appendix D - Copy of objection
- Appendix E - Council's response to the objector

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents:

Cabinet Report 9th February 2016
Council Report 23rd February 2016
Report available from www.coventry.gov.uk/councilmeetings

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title:

Closure of Part of Cox Street Car Park – Objection

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 Cox Street Car Park is currently a 336 space, pay on foot surface car park opposite Fairfax Street Swimming Pool and Leisure centre.
- 1.2 The whole Car Park extends to approximately 2.115 acres (0.8560 hectares).
- 1.3 The area approved for disposal and development is approximately 1.234 acres (0.4994 hectares) representing about 57% of the existing Car Park and affecting approximately 192 designated car parking spaces, outlined red on the site map attached as Appendix A to the report.
- 1.4 144 car parking spaces would remain primarily under the ring road available for city centre parking during and after the development, outlined blue on the site map attached as Appendix A to the report.
- 1.5 The Cabinet and Council Report of 9th and 23rd February 2016 respectively, approved the partial disposal of the surface Car Park for the development of up to 1000 bed student housing and delegated authority to conclude the disposal subject to best and final offers sought from the two bidding parties for the site, along with the commencement of the car park closure process.
- 1.6 In order to comply with the formal car park closure procedure, a public notice was advertised in the Coventry Telegraph on Friday 27th May 2016 outlining the proposed closure and providing 21 days for objections to the closure to be received, closing on the 17th June 2016. No objections were received to this stage of the process.
- 1.7 Site notices advising of the proposed closure were erected at the pedestrian exits onto Cox Street and Fairfax Street as well as adjacent to the pay on foot payment machines. These were posted on 28th June 2016 and allowed a further 21 days for objections to the closure to be received. The 21 days objections period closed on the 19th July 2016. Appendix B to the report refers.
- 1.8 A Statement of Reasons outlining the rationale behind the part closure of the car park was held at the CC4 Reception for public inspection. Appendix C to the report refers.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 From the public notices one objection has been received. Appendix D to the report refers.
- 2.2 The basis of the objection was the loss of parking spaces and the impact this might have on those using the swimming pool and leisure centre in Fairfax Street. Although accepting there may be other car parks nearby the objector's main concern was whether people would be prepared to make the additional walk especially on dark nights.
- 2.3 A response to the objector has been sent providing additional information looking to allay their concerns and seeking a withdrawal of the objection, Appendix E to the report refers. To date there has been no further response from the objector.

2.4 **Response to Objection**

It is recognised by the Council that the reduction of spaces at Cox Street will cause disruption to the existing users of the Car Park.

However, 144 spaces are being retained on site in Cox Street Car Park. It is accepted that the anticipated nearest exit from the retained Car Park will increase the walk to the swimming pool and leisure centre facility by approximately 100 metres. The Car Park under the ring road is lit and the route from the Car Park to the entrance of the swimming pool, which is on the public highway, is also lit.

There are two other public car parks which are within close proximity of the swimming pool and leisure centre at Lower Ford Street and Grove Street and these will remain accessible by the public throughout the construction phase of the development. These car parks have the greatest spare capacity at evenings and weekends.

As part of the finished development, the developer has committed to provide circa 170 spaces under the building which will be made available to the public. These spaces would be available at the same parking charge rate as the Council run car parks nearby. This commitment has been legally secured by way of a development agreement.

2.5 **Alternative Option**

Uphold the objection keeping the Car Park open, recognising having concluded that the reduction in car spaces is more valuable to the City than the proposed development of the site.

Within the Cabinet report which approved the disposal of the Car Park subject to the closure, it was considered that should it be concluded within the emerging car parking strategy for the city centre that the two remaining alternative car parks nearby need to have further support to cope with the displaced vehicles then White Street Coach Park may have capacity to take some additional cars.

2.6 **Preferred Option**

It is recommended that the option described in paragraph 2.4 of the report above is adopted thereby upholding the Car Park part-closure and dismiss the objection, as Cox Street car park will continue to operate and there will be ample off-street parking available in nearby car parks, namely Lower Ford Street and Grove Street, to accommodate the displaced vehicles. Lower Ford Street has capacity for 152 cars and Grove Street has capacity for 188.

It is acknowledged that during the construction phase of the development, the alternative car parks are further away than the area proposed to be closed but that the quality of the routes and distances are considered acceptable.

The inconvenience to the users of the Swimming Pool and Leisure centre would be temporary and a new parking facility of around 170 spaces would be made available to the public within the new development. This would be managed and run by the development and aimed to support the use of the Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre. These new spaces would be charged at the same rate as the Council run public spaces nearby.

3. **Timetable for implementing this decision**

- 3.1 To enable the first phase of the development to open for the academic year commencing in September 2017 a planning application needs to be submitted in early September 2016, planning permission granted and a start on site in the Autumn of this year. If this timetable is not able to be achieved then the developer would delay the start on site for 6 - 9 months to then be available for students to occupy in September 2018, creating a year's delay.
- 3.2 If the recommendation to close part of the Car Park is upheld, the notice to complete the closure would take place once a planning consent had been approved and the developer was ready to start on site to ensure the spaces remain available until required for development. A two week notice period ahead of the closure would be used to advise the public by way of site notices of the closure date for the spaces.

4. **Comments from Executive Director, Resources**

4.1 Financial implications

Cabinet and Council previously considered the financial implications and approved the disposal.

A significant capital receipt for the Council would be lost if the development does not go ahead.

4.2 Legal implications

Cabinet and Council previously considered the legal implications and approved the disposal.

The Council's powers to regulate off street parking are set out in Section 32 to 35 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. The Council will continue to regulate the retained part of the Cox Street facility under this power if the Cabinet Member opts to proceed with the part closure.

5. **Other implications**

5.1 **How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?**

Cabinet and Council previously considered how the development would contribute to the achievement of the key objectives and corporate priorities and approved the disposal.

5.2 **How is risk being managed?**

Cabinet and Council previously considered how risk was to be managed and approved the disposal.

5.3 **What is the impact on the organisation?**

Cabinet and Council previously considered the impact on the organisation and approved the disposal.

5.4 **Equalities / EIA**

Cabinet and Council previously considered the Equalities implications and approved the disposal.

5.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

Cabinet and Council previously considered the environmental implications and approved the disposal.

5.6 Implications for partner organisations?

Cabinet and Council previously considered the implications for partner organisations and approved the disposal.

Report author(s):

Name and job title:

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Directorate:

Place

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Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

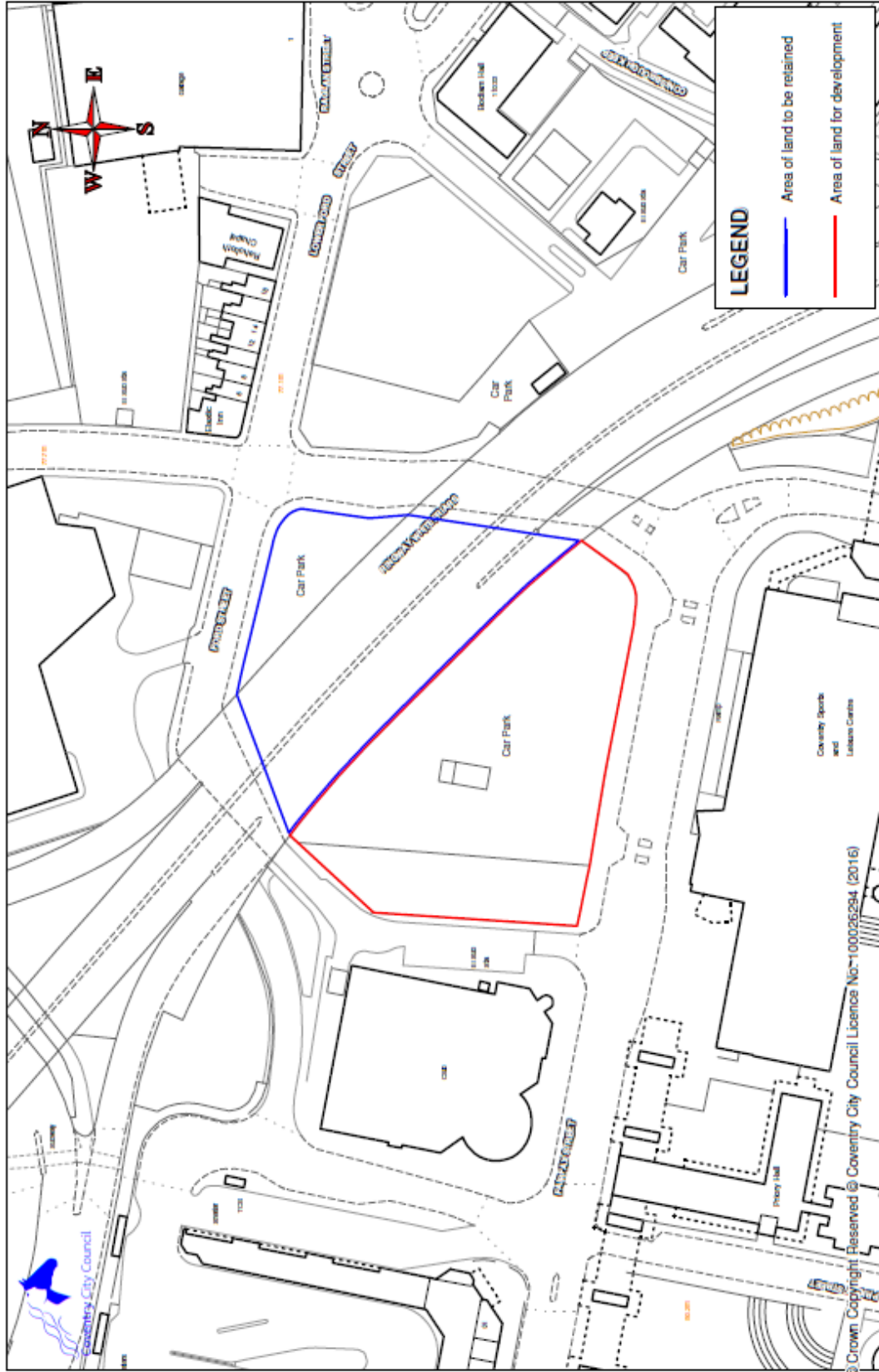
Contributor/approver name	Title	Directorate or organisation	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
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Michelle Salmon	Governance Services Officer	Resources	27/7/16	29/7/16
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Names of approvers for submission (officers and Members):				
Colin Knight	Assistant Director (Planning, Transport & Highways)	Place	27/7/16	27/7/16
Rob Parkes	Commercial Lawyer	Resources	26/7/16	26/7/16
Martin Yardley	Executive Director	Place	27/7/16	27/7/16
Councillor J Innes	Cabinet Member for Public Services	-	26/7/16	26/7/16

This report is published on the council's website: www.coventry.gov.uk/councilmeetings

Appendix A

Cox Street Car Park, Coventry.

Scale at A4 1 : 1250



Appendix B

Notice is hereby given that Coventry City Council ("the Council"), under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended), propose to remove part of Cox Street Car Park (off Cox Street) from the City of Coventry (Off-Street Parking Places) Order 2005, and ultimately close that part of the facility.

The Cox Street facility currently provides 336 spaces covering a 2.11 acre site. The proposal would see the removal of 192 spaces (or thereabouts) covering 1.23 acres. It is intended 144 spaces (or thereabouts) will remain available for use within the facility. That area of the facility proposed for removal is shown for the purposes of identification on the attached plan.

It is proposed that the said part of the Cox Street site will cease to be used as a public car park and will be disposed of to facilitate the construction of up to a 1000 bed purpose built student accommodation. Once the said part ceases to be used as a public car park it will no longer need to be controlled under the terms of the City of Coventry (Off-Street Parking Places) Order 2005.

At completion of the scheme 170 spaces will be made available for public use within the development. Other Council car parks in the vicinity, including the nearby Grove Street and Lower Ford Street facilities plus on street parking availability in the locality can be used as alternatives to Cox Street. .

All other details contained in the City of Coventry (Off-Street Parking Places) Order 2005 (as amended) remain unchanged.

A copy of the proposed Order, Statement of Reasons and identifying plans may be inspected at Civic Centre 4 (Reception Area), Much Park Street, Coventry, during normal office hours.

Any objections to the proposal must be forwarded to Mr R Parkes, Legal Services (Place Team), Coventry City Council, 3rd Floor Broadgate House, Broadgate, Coventry, CV1 1NG, by no later than 19th July 2016. Objections may also be forwarded via email to 'rob.parkes@coventry.gov.uk'. Objections must be in writing and must state the grounds on which they are made.

Any person requiring further information in connection with this proposal should in the first instance contact Mr Paul Bowman (Parking Services Manager) on telephone number 02476 834243.

Cox Street Car Park, Coventry.

Scale at A4 1 : 1250



Plan Production Date: 30/04/2014 This plan is for identification purposes only.

Appendix C

Statement of Reasons

Cox Street Car Park – Part Closure

The closure of part of Cox Street car park has been proposed and approved by Cabinet and Council to provide an opportunity to develop up to 1000 bed purpose built student accommodation.

The accommodation will help to support the growth and development of Coventry University, a key stakeholder in the city centre and a substantial resource for the future growth and development of the City.

In addition it helps to support the regeneration of the whole of the city centre bringing vitality to the area both day and night.

It will also mean that fewer houses in multiple occupation are required in local communities.

Coventry University currently has 23,000 students studying with them annually and anticipate that within 5-6 years this will grow to circa 30,000 students, a 30% increase in student numbers.

Coventry University welcomes approximately 6000 first year students to the city, which will increase. To support this growth and compete with other Universities, Coventry is aspiring to be able to provide each 'fresher' with the ability to live within purpose built halls for a year, should they wish. They would also like to have capacity to enable returning students to also live in halls if they so choose. This is particularly of interest to their international students.

Coventry has approximately 5000 student bed spaces in the city centre made up of both purpose built and converted accommodation. 1300 bed spaces are currently owned and managed by Coventry University.

Coventry University is in the process of delivering directly and in partnership an additional 2200 bed spaces the city centre over the next 3 years through at three locations.

Warwick University currently accommodate circa 560 post graduate students in Coventry City Centre as well as a growing number of undergraduates. Due to Warwick's projected growth and on-going development constraints at their campus, it is anticipated that they could be looking to secure approximately 2000 additional bed spaces in Coventry over the next few years.

Cox Street car park currently provides 336 spaces on a site extending to 2.11 acres. The proposal would see the removal of 1.23 acres, 58% of the whole site (approximately 192 spaces) for development.

Approximately 144 spaces would remain available for use within Cox Street car park during and after the proposed scheme.

Post development up to a maximum of 170 car park spaces would be made available for the public to use within the development. As discussions are on-going around the future of the swimming Pool and Leisure facility in Fairfax Street.

Based on car parks average occupancy rates, this would create a need to identify approximately 130 alternative car parking spaces in the locality during the construction period.

Grove Street car park, having 188 spaces and Lower Ford Street car park having 152 spaces are long stay car parks located close to Cox St. Both car parks are a short walk from the sports centre and swimming baths. These two car parks are well used during the weekend have capacity to provide alternative weekend parking for cars displaced from Cox Street car park.

In addition the developer is presenting the Council with the option that they could construct the proposed scheme in such a way that they would create approximately 170 parking spaces under the building, at ground floor level. These spaces would be available to the public and complement the retained Cox Street spaces remaining available until and if a decision to close the Fairfax Street swimming pool and leisure centre is made and implemented.

Appendix D

Email Objection received Friday 15th July @ 01.15

Dear Mr Parkes

I read your notice re the above after visiting the Swimming Baths this evening.

The reduction from 340 to 140 places is a severe reduction.

I suppose in your mind the Swimming Baths does not have a future. However, my concern is that the reduced capacity of the remaining car park that will no doubt be pushed under the ring road, may not be adequate for the considerable number of people that do frequent the Swimming Baths. No doubt you will inform me that there other car parks nearby but I do not think people will be prepared to walk to other remote car parks on dark nights. The reduction in the size of the car park may well be the final death knell for the Swimming Baths.

Anyway, with the coming about of Brexit will Coventry University continue to thrive? I expect that they receive a lot of money from Europe as well as students from Europe that in future may not chose to come. You might as well rename Coventry City Centre as Coventry University Student Living Centre.

Best regards

Appendix E

Email response sent to objector Monday 18th July @16.27

Dear xxxxxxx

Thank you for your recent email correspondence and note your concerns are mainly focused around the potential effect of reducing the car park's capacity for those people using the Swimming Pool and Leisure Centre opposite.

From research commissioned when looking at the development options for part of the car park, the survey of the current car park users indicated that approximately 36% of those spaces occupied were being used by patrons of the leisure centre / swimming pool and therefore understand the requirement for parking associated with the leisure facility.

Of the 144 spaces which would be retained at Cox Street (predominantly under cover of the elevated ring road) it is appreciated that they would be physically further away from the sports centre and swimming pool, especially those spaces which currently front onto Fairfax Street and therefore considered as less convenient. However at approximately 100 meters away, it would be considered a reasonable distance for most users to walk for a city centre facility. There is also the alternative Lower Ford Street Pay and Display car park which equally approximately 100 meter walk from to the swimming pool entrance.

If the development was to proceed then part of the implementation strategy would be to provide clear and helpful information to the public to aid their understanding of the alternative parking options available to them.

You may not be aware that as part of the Council's public report on this development proposal, the selected developer has committed to provide publicly available car parking spaces under the new building. This means that after the construction phase is completed approximately 170 spaces will be available for those wishing to use the swimming pool and leisure centre. These spaces would be available at the same cost of the surrounding Council Car Parks, so wouldn't cost you more.

I hope you agree that the re-provision of car parking spaces under the new development confirms that the Council continues to consider and support the users of the swimming pool and leisure centre in Fairfax Street until a final decision over its long term future is made.

Based on the above position and commitment I write to ask you to withdraw your objection to the part closure of Cox Street Car Park.

With regards your final point about Coventry University and overseas students still coming post Brexit, clearly things are likely to be different however like most of us we are just not sure how different yet. I am sure that the Government as part of the extensive discussion over the next two years will be looking at how students from the EU could still come and study at UK universities as this would still be highly valuable to our Country's future trade and economy. I would also point out that recently at both Coventry and Warwick Universities that a key and growing sector of students are International students, coming from the rest of the world, specifically the Far East especially China including Hong Kong and African countries like Nigeria and as such aren't directly affected by the decision to leave the European Community.

I appreciate that most developments discussed in the press and commenced construction in the city centre recently have related to student housing. I think this reflects the growth of these educational facilities and particularly Coventry University's meteoric rise in the University league tables being voted University of the year in 2015. However this may also be because historically there has been an undersupply of good quality, purpose built accommodation available to the 6000 new students which come to Coventry University annually. The quality of accommodation provided is a key aspect for prospective students in making their choice of University to study at. It also has a positive benefit for houses which had previously been used as Homes of Multiple Occupation (HMO's) which then become available for families to rent or purchase providing a more stable community.

I look forward to hearing back from you if you feel able to withdraw your objection.

Yours sincerely

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