

CAR PARK OPTIONS - HOOK ROAD

Head of Service:	Rod Brown, Head of Housing & Community
Report Author	Richard Chevalier
Wards affected:	Town Ward;
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

Summary

This paper sets out interim payment options for Hook Road multi-storey car park users prior to any redevelopment.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Authorise officers to proceed with Option A, B or C as highlighted in Section 3 of this report.**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 Whilst no formal decision has been made about the future redevelopment of the car park, the current barrier and payment equipment within the car park is reaching end of life and a new operating system is required by the end of 2024.

2 Background

- 2.1 Hook Road car park has been identified as part of a larger site for potential redevelopment as part of the emerging Local Plan. Should Hook Road car park be released for redevelopment the site is likely to be cleared as part of a wider decontamination remediation strategy with works commencing as soon as the end of 2025.

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- 2.2 The current barrier-controlled car parking system was introduced into Hook Road Car Park in 2011. Much of the equipment is now reaching end of life and the system providers have advised us that some of the ICT functionality, including the ability to programme tokens or accept payment by card, will be lost at the end of 2024.
- 2.3 Whilst equivalent visitor numbers have not returned to Hook Road since the pandemic, particularly in terms of commuter parking, the car park still received revenue of over £275,000 in 2023-24 and so there will be a loss to the Council if it is not functioning in some capacity.
- 2.4 The car park is used by Season card holders (including Council staff), Parker Card holders who get a reduced rate of parking, pay as you park customers and visitors to the Rainbow Leisure Centre who can also get a daily discount if they validate their token at the Centre.
- 2.5 In other uses, a local car dealership store vehicles on the top floor of the car park, a car boot sale is held here in the winter months when Hook Road Arena cannot be used and the car park hosts a mobile telephone mast on the top of the building.
- 2.6 In the first quarter of this calendar year over 21,000 people have used Hook Road car park.
- 44% exited via a token – therefore pay to park customers.
12.5% in addition used a token that had been discounted at the Rainbow Centre
26.5% used a season card (including residents and Council staff)
17% used a Parker card
- 2.7 Hook Road Car Park is closed and locked at 11pm on a Monday to Friday, 8pm on a Saturday and all day on a Sunday and Bank Holidays.

3 Options & Requirements

- 3.1 The car park will ideally continue to offer parking for the following:
- Commuters to and from Epsom seeking a reasonable all day parking rate
 - Parker Card holders who currently pay £4 per day
 - Council staff and other local businesses who hold annual permits
 - Visitors to the Rainbow Leisure Centre at a discounted rate
 - A local car dealership who rent spaces on the top floor

3.2 Option A

Upgrade the barrier-controlled car park system in the car park

3.2.1 A new barrier-controlled software would almost certainly mean that we could meet all of the requirements set out above although a solution may be required to replace the token validator which provides a discount to Rainbow Centre users.

3.2.2 This option would be the most expensive with estimated spend likely to be in the region of £35-£40k.

3.2.3 Should a decision be made to redevelop the car park, one consideration with Option A is that most of the equipment could be redeployed from Hook Road car park to provide parking controls at a new location. However, a barrier-controlled system may not be the solution elsewhere and therefore the investment may be short term, with it being recognised that the cost of investment may ultimately be lost after a year.

3.2.4 Environment Committee would need to identify how it could fund an investment of £35k-£40k. Should there be an underspend following completion of the capital works at the Ashley Centre car park, subject to the approval of a suitable business case approved by Strategy and Resources Committee, it may be possible if the underspend was sufficient to fund the upgraded barrier controls at Hook Road, However, there is no guarantee that there will be any (or sufficient) remaining budget from the Ashley Centre project to cover the full cost at Hook Road, and the Environment Committee would still need to identify funding for any shortfall.

3.2.5 The system itself would be the most user friendly and the advantage of this sort of system is that it largely self manages, with the barriers reducing the need for enforcement as payment is required to exit.

3.2.6 Option A (or B) would allow car park users to continue to pay by cash or card at a machine.

3.3 Option B

Remove the barriers and operate a pay & display system in conjunction with RingGo

3.3.1 The barrier-controlled entry and exit stations could be removed and replaced with a pay and display system.

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- 3.3.2 In terms of access there would be advantages as there would be no issues at entry and exit caused by barriers. There could however be an increase in vehicle speed as they enter and leave the car park, as there would no longer be a barrier to ensure they have to stop. Some additional control measures, such as speed bumps, may be required.
- 3.3.3 A pay and display system can also have its disadvantages in a multi-storey car park. Sufficient machines would be required to ensure that someone parking on level 3 or 4 would not have to walk to the ground floor to purchase a ticket and then return to their vehicle to display it. Car park visitors would also be required to pay for their parking in advance. This has proved to be less popular with visitors who generally prefer to pay on exit rather than estimate their intended length of stay and ensure they return on time (although RingGo would aid this as people could increase their parking stay remotely).
- 3.3.4 From an enforcement perspective this option would require officers to patrol the car park on foot which is not ideal. There would be some Health and Safety risks of officers walking around on foot although the large bays and the longer stay nature of this car park, would result in reduced risk compared to shorter stay car parks, such as the Ashley Centre.
- 3.3.5 There could be an increase in non-payment without barrier controls, as some may take a chance, but it may be countered by some income from Penalty Charge Notice revenue. It may also lead to an increase in anti-social behaviour as there would be nothing to stop drivers entering the car park, this being a particular concern later in the day/evening.
- 3.3.6 There would still be costs involved in this method likely to be in the region of £15-£25k depending on how many pay machines are installed. Given that most people would have a paper permit or use RingGo then potentially three machines may suffice. This investment may also be short term and lost after a year should the car park be included for redevelopment.
- 3.3.7 As with Option A, Environment Committee would need to identify how it could fund this level of investment. The circumstances set-out at paragraph 3.2.4 are applicable here too.

3.4 Option C

Remove the barriers and operate a RingGo only system

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- 3.4.1 In many ways this would be similar to Option 2 in that it would require the removal of the barriers, the need for the visitor to pay in advance and enforcement to be carried out by Civil Enforcement Officers.
- 3.4.2 However, the RingGo only element would save on any installation costs of machinery and civil works caused by installing and removing equipment. There would also be a small saving on cash collection costs.
- 3.4.3 Hook Road serves as a longer-term car park for Epsom, often preferred by commuters. Option C would represent the first major car park to move to a cashless only system. This might give rise to some negative feedback, however given the temporary nature of Hook Road, it could be seen as a pilot providing information on moving long stay car parking into the cashless era.
- 3.4.4 The majority of car park users across the council's pay and display car parks prefer to use RingGo over other payment methods. RingGo can be used by a smart phone app or by calling their automated telephone line.
- 3.4.5 Currently RingGo users pay a 20p 'convenience charge' to park in Epsom & Ewell Borough car parks and so it may be that if a RingGo only option is used that we reduce the parking fee by 20p to accommodate this as otherwise users have no other option than to pay the additional fee.
- 3.4.6 It is expected implementation costs would be minimal, approximately up to £3k for speed bumps etc., which could be funded from current maintenance budgets. The Council would achieve a saving of c.£600 per annum from cash collection costs.

3.5 Assessment of three options meeting requirements

User	Option A	Option B	Option C
Pay as you park users	As existing	Pay and display / RingGo tariff available	RingGo tariff available
Parker Card holders	As existing	Council could offer £4 rate that could be displayed on dashboard alongside Parker Card	Council could offer £4 RingGo rate with vehicles also displaying Parker Card
Council Staff / Season permits/ Residents	Details kept on season entry list.	Paper permits to be issued	Paper permits to be issued
Rainbow Centre visitors	Similar discounted option perhaps using a QR code or equivalent.	<i>*£2.00 option at machines working in conjunction with a verification tablet at the Leisure Centre</i>	<i>* £2.00 RingGo tariff used in conjunction with verification tablet at the Leisure Centre</i>

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Car dealership	As existing	Dealership to display something on dashboard	Dealership to display something on dashboard
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*the final details will be ratified upon confirmation of this approach but would involve the introduction of a scheme by which Rainbow Leisure Centre users can continue to receive a discounted parking rate on their parking session.

4 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

4.1 Equality Impact Assessment (see Appendix 1)

- 4.1.1 Option A is not expected to have any impact on protected characteristics.
- 4.1.2 Option B may impact those who pay and display. For older, disabled or pregnant users or those with very young children then there may be an inconvenience of walking to a pay station to purchase a ticket and then having to return to their vehicle to display it. The use of RingGo would mitigate this risk for some.
- 4.1.3 Option C would impact those without access or who are unwilling to pay via a mobile phone. Whilst this is not a protected characteristic it may disproportionately impact on older users.
- 4.1.4 The majority of Hook Road car park users are commuters to and from the Town, or users of the Leisure Centre and therefore it is likely that a very high proportion of users will not be impacted by option C.
- 4.1.5 However, for those that are, we intend to implement good comms in advance and clear signage to confirm RingGo only use in Hook Road and signposting to alternative car parks which would accept cash/coin.

4.2 Crime & Disorder

- 4.2.1 There is a risk that by removing the barriers we could see an increase in:
 - a) Speed – the barriers currently ensure that drivers have to slow down upon entry and exit.

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- b) Anti-social behaviour – the removal of the barriers would allow drivers to enter unhindered and therefore at quieter times, such as in the evenings or in wet weather, could see an increase in social gatherings, car meets and ASB. The Design Out Crime Officer for Surrey Police has shared his concerns regarding the possibility of more anti-social behaviour. Hook Road car park benefits from extensive CCTV provision and higher levels patrols by the council's civil enforcement officers patrols would be in place if barriers were removed. The car park is locked in the evenings and overnight.

4.3 Safeguarding

4.3.1 No concerns for the purposes of this report.

4.4 Dependencies

4.4.1 The key dependency to be considered in conjunction with the options set out above is that Hook Road car park has been identified for development in the emerging Local Plan. Consequently any investment should be considered against the remaining operation life of the car park.

4.4.2 Option A, and to a lesser extent Option B involve expenditure on essential works. Any expectation of funding from underspend on agreed capital investments in the Ashley Centre, would be dependent on these projects achieving any underspend and obtaining the necessary approvals should underspends be achieved.

4.5 Other

4.5.1 A change of system and a change of payment methods may have a reputational risk as car park users adapt to any change that directly impacts them.

4.5.2 All three options are preferable to the 'do nothing' option which will see the car park cease to operate after December 2024.

5 Financial Implications

5.1 The financial implications of each option are summarised in the following table:

5.2

Option	Capital costs	Revenue costs	Additional financial implications
Option A	Up to £40k	Approx £10k p.a. (from yr2)	None anticipated. Up front costs will ensure continuity of service
Option B	Up to £25k	Approx £2k p.a. (from yr2)	Natural reduction in income from barrier to pay & display. (Income did reduce by about

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			5% when Town Hall changed from barrier to pay and display although PCN income increased). Some reputational damage and possible avoidance of fee paying. Enforcement levels will need to increase, but this will be covered through re-prioritising existing staffing resource.
Option C	Up to £3k	None	Natural reduction in income from barrier to pay & display. Some reputational damage and possible avoidance of fee paying. Enforcement levels will need to increase, but this will be covered through re-prioritising existing staffing resource. Maintenance costs could reduce by as much as £10k per year. As identified in 3.4.5 if the Council reduced the fee by 20p to incorporate the RingGo fee then it could impact revenue by approximately £7,500 per year. Some savings would be realised in cash collection costs c.£600 p.a.

5.3 Environment Committee will need to identify funding for the capital costs of each option, as set-out earlier in the report.

5.4 The ongoing additional annual revenue costs for options A and B could be funded from existing budgets for Hook Road Car Park maintenance. Option C would not have an ongoing maintenance cost, as this would be borne by Ringo, which would assist the Council in its wider need to identify ongoing operational efficiencies.

5.5 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** Financial implications are set out in the body of the report.

6 Legal Implications

6.1 There is no requirement to undertake a public consultation because none of the options require the Traffic Order to be amended.

6.2 **Legal Officer's comments** None for the purposes of this report.

7 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

7.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:

- Effective Council
- Opportunity & Prosperity

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7.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is not included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

7.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:**

No impact anticipated.

7.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:**

See ASB concern in 4.2.1

7.5 **Partnerships:**

The chosen solution should enable us to continue to work in partnership with Local Businesses and the Rainbow Leisure Centre.

8 Background papers

8.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- None

Other papers:

- None