



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet
13th November 2024

Report of the Head of Engineering & Transport – David W. Griffiths & the Head of Property & Regeneration – Simon Brennan

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected Neath East, Neath North, Pontardawe and Port Talbot.

Disposal of Off-Street Pay & Display Car Parks Capacity Review

Purpose of the Report:

To provide information in relation to car park usage within the three town centres and to consider their possible disposal for regeneration and or lease.

Executive Summary:

As part of the medium to long-term financial plan members requested a report be prepared providing information on car park usage and the possibility of disposing surplus requirements for potential regeneration, leasing or disposal.

Background:

The council currently operate and maintain thirteen-town centre pay and display car parks as outlined below.

Over the last decade, there has been a shift from high street shopping to on-line shopping at a national level. Further, the pandemic has caused a significant reduction in demand for spaces available in the council town centres car parks. The introduction of working from home by the private sector along with the introduction of hybrid working by the authority has further reduced the need for spaces currently provided.

The council has also received an informal enquiry from the Aberafan Shopping Centre owners (Signal Capital) about possibly taking over the running of Port Talbot multi-storey car park as an operator while the authority retain ownership of the asset.

A housing developer has approached the council's planning department to discuss access and development of an adjoining site and would wish to secure access through the Pontardawe by-pass car park, with a possibility of further enhancing their development providing much needed housing in the area.

Network Rail mostly owns Milland Road Car Park and forms part of the TFW franchise for Neath Railway Station and The Arch Co Company, from whom the council leases the land, owns the remaining car park.

Officers from the authority's Planning Department have reviewed the sites identified below to establish if any of the car parks would be suitable for regeneration purposes and suitability of the sites to help meet the future housing needs as part of the proposed Local Development Plan, initial feedback is set out below:

Existing car parks at Bethany Square, Pontardawe by-pass and Rosser Street have been considered for potential re-use for residential development. All of the sites are within existing settlement limits, in sustainable locations with good access to goods and services and have the potential to be redeveloped. Herbert Street by-pass and Rosser Street are both narrow sites and would therefore be more suited to flat / apartment development. Bethany Square is a larger area and would have the scope for a mix of housing types, however, given the pattern and nature of adjacent development, a flat / apartment development may be more appropriate at this location. Bethany Square and Pontardawe by-pass have some flooding constraints that would need to be overcome.

Car Park Data

Listed below are the current car parks in each town centre showing the income and expenditure over the last two years along with capacity levels of the car parks.

Neath

Car Park	Capacity	Income 2022/23	Expenditure 2022/23	Net Income 2022/23	Income 2023/24	Expenditure 2023/24	Net Income 2023/24
High Street	37	£40,274	£11,503	£28,722	£44,460	£6,995	£37,505
Milland Road	413	£93,859	£113,438	-£19,850	£122,401	£84,903	£37,498
MSCP	31	£198,693	£246,705	-£48,012	£337,911	£249,584	£88,328
Rosser St.	31	£10,485	£3,585	£6,900	£11,689	£1,873	£9,817

Pontardawe

It should be noted that income is lower in Pontardawe due to the first hour of parking being free of charge. Flooding has affected the income at Herbert Street Lower Car Park and remedial works are planned as part of the minor works program in 2024 to resolve the issue.

Car Park	Capacity	Income 2022/23	Expenditure 2022/23	Net Income 2022/23	Income 2023/24	Expenditure 2023/24	Net Income 2023/24
By-Pass	44	£2,518	£1,428	£1,090	£4,492	£1,428	£3,064
Herbert St Upper	37	£6,193	£2,380	£3,813	£8,765	£2,488	£6,277
Herbert St Lower	19	£4,018	£925	£3093,	£4,351	£8,345	-£3,993

Port Talbot

Car Park	Capacity	Income 2022/23	Expenditure 2022/23	Net Income/ Loss 2022/23	Income 2023/24	Expenditure 2023/24	Net Income/Loss 2023/24
Bethany Sq.	158	£65,877	£22,586	£43,291	£74,921	£7,764	£67,157
Civic Centre	74	£2,328	£3,797	-£1,469	£1,318	£3,796	-£2,478
Harbourside	164	£38,796	£19,652	£19,144	£55,848	£7,809	£48,038
MSCP	705	£118,743	£153,159	-£34,416	£136,823	£186,584	-£49,760
Station Rd	107	£53,241	£21,559	£31,682	£61,086	£7,541	£53,545
St Mary's	41	£34,288	£6,844	£27,444	£32,023	£6,041	£25,981

There is no evidence based statistical data available, as the council do not have any occupancy counters in any car parks. Subsequently the occupancy figures indicated below are based on visual inspections.

Neath

High Street is a very popular car park and is normally has between 80% and 100% occupancy levels.

Milland Road is mainly a commuter-based car park for train passengers and is normally 50% occupied.

Multi-storey is the most used car park in Neath especially since the opening of the new leisure centre. However, due to council staff working from home the occupancy level is still only around 60%.

Rosser Street car park is not very well utilised other than when there is an event on at the Gnoll Rugby ground and it usually only 10% occupied.

Pontardawe

By-pass car park is not very popular and is only 20% utilised.

Herbert Street Lower is normally 50% occupied.

Herbert Street Upper is the most used car park in Pontardawe and is normally between 90% and 100% occupied.

Port Talbot

Bethany Square is a very popular car park and is normally 60% occupied.

Civic Centre is only a pay and display car park on weekends and is very poorly utilised as members of the public do not realise they can use it on weekends and is normally 20% occupied.

Harbourside is mainly a commuter-based car park for train passengers and is normally 50% occupied.

Multi-storey car park despite being adjacent to the Aberafan Shopping Centre is not very well utilised because of the condition of the car park combined with council staff working from home the occupancy level is only 40%.

Station Road car park is not very popular and is only 30% utilised.

St Mary's car park is well utilised due to its proximity to the Aberafan Shopping Centre and bus station and is usually 80% occupied.

Options for disposal/alternative use.

In relation to the three town centres, there is scope to dispose of a car park in each town centre and retain enough capacity for visitor parking.

Neath

Milland Road car park is not owned by the council and is owned by Network Rail. Network Rail lease the lower half of the car park to The Arch Company Properties Ltd who in turn rent it to us. There is no lease in place for the top half of the car park; however, we have been operating it as a car park since 1997. It should be noted that income being generated in the car park comes from the land that we do not own or rent.

Network Rail have notified us that they wish to make a claim on income that we have received from their land which is currently being looked at by legal. We cannot afford to rent the land that Network Rail own as it would mean the car park running at a loss. Milland Road car park is currently making a small profit, however, should there be an increase by The Arch Company Properties Ltd in rental costs at the end of the year it would be running at a loss.

Further, due to structural issues with a retaining wall at this car park, urgent repairs totalling £75k has been spent from the Councils capital programme this year to facilitate the Neath Great Fair, which is run and operated by the Showman's Guild.

The current lease with The Arch Co ends in December 2024 and would be an opportunity for the council to exit the agreement. We would not recommend continuing with the arrangement, as the Council would incur expenditure with no income. The income comes from the land owned by Network Rail, leased to Transport for Wales who will operate that part of the car park themselves.

There is also further consideration required by members should they decide to withdraw from the current arrangement in terms of the impacts on the Great Neath Fair. If this process was embarked on, it should be noted that the Showman's Guild would need to negotiate directly with the two present landowners, namely Network Rail and the Arch Co. Limited for the continued use of the car park for the Spring and September Fairs.

Should members decide not to terminate the lease with the Arch Co Limited, then a financial pressure will exist that will need to be addressed as part of the on-going budget pressures.

Rosser Street car park is surplus to requirements and could be marketed for development.

Neath MSCP and High Street should be retained as part of the pay & display operational car parking portfolio.

Pontardawe

By-pass car park could be sold for development, as there is capacity in the remaining town centre car parks. It is important to note that the regeneration of Pontardawe Arts Centre should bring in additional visitors.

Occupation surveys would need to be undertaken when there are events on to establish usage at such time should an offer for the car park be received before a decision could be made.

Herbert Street Upper and Lower car parks be retained as part of the pay & display operational car parking portfolio.

Port Talbot

Officers are currently in discussions with Signal Capital whom own the Aberavon Shopping Center about leasing the MSCP. This would

generate a possible income stream to the council and more importantly would result in cost avoidance and future revenue and capital expenditure. The lessee would be responsible for all operational costs and enforcement. This arrangement would not result in any loss of car parking capacity in the town centre.

Bethany Square car park could be made available for development as part of the town centre regeneration.

St Mary's, Station Road, Civic Centre and Harbourside car parks be retained as part of the pay & display operational car parking portfolio.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

No implications

Workforce Impacts:

It is important to note that consideration will need to be given to the long-term future of Port Talbot Civic Centre and Theatre in terms of designated parking for council staff in any disposal of the Port Talbot MSCP. We have been assured by the Aberavon Shopping Centre owners that they would be happy to accommodate this should they lease the car park which would be reflected in any lease agreement.

Legal Impacts:

The council will have to follow due process and procedure for the disposal or regeneration of council land.

Risk Management Impacts:

If a new operator takes over the running of the Port Talbot MSCP and their tariff charges are less than the authority-controlled car parks, then this could result in less people using the council car parks.

If the decision is taken not to sell or lease the Port Talbot MSCP the outstanding maintenance backlog and general condition of the car park and the associated health & safety implications will need to be addressed in the short to medium term (circa £1.6 million).

Consultation:

External consultation is not required for this report.

Scrutiny Observations:

The report will be considered at Environment, Regeneration and Street Scene Scrutiny Committee on 8th November 2024.

Recommendations:

Having due regard to the integrated impact assessment it is recommended that members authorise the Head of Property & Regeneration to:

- (1) Approve the instigation of disposal procedures for Rosser Street Car Park in Neath.
- (2) Enter negotiations with Arch Company Limited to clarify the cost of a new lease or withdrawing from the arrangement with a further report presented to cabinet for decision.
- (3) Continue negotiations and agree terms with Signal Capital to lease the Port Talbot MSCP and to bring a further report back to cabinet for a final decision.

(4) That Bethany Square Car Park be retained for now and its disposal be re-considered should future development opportunities arise as part of the Town Centres regeneration with further reports brought back to Cabinet for decision in the future.

(5) That the By-Pass Car Park in Pontardawe, also be retained for now and be re-considered as and when development opportunities come to fruition, with further reports brought back to Cabinet for decision in the future.

Reasons for Proposed Decisions:

To allow officers to enter into negotiation to dispose of surplus car parks for development and regeneration.

Implementation of Decision:

After the three day, call in period.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Integrated Impact Assessment Screening.

Appendix 2 Plan of Milland Road Car Park.

Appendix 3 Plan of Rosser Street Car Park

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