

ROCHFORD TOWN CENTRE - ACCESS TO BACK LANE CAR PARK

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' views on a proposal to alter the access arrangements to Back Lane car park in order to improve traffic flows in Rochford Town Centre.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Rochford Town Centre Working Group, when it met, considered various options for improvements to traffic flows in the Town. The Working Group were particularly interested in options to improve the access to Back Lane car park.
- 2.2 The County Council's Local Transport Plan includes a specific category for schemes to improve traffic management in Rochford Town Centre and the sum of £100,000 has been allocated for this purpose in 2002/03.
- 2.3 At the meeting of Environmental Services Committee on 2nd October 2002, Members agreed that £15,000 of the £100,000 budget should be allocated to the creation of a new access to the Back Lane car park.

3 THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 At present, traffic entering the Back Lane car park must negotiate a difficult entrance from West Street. To get to the car park entrance, cars must either arrive from Bradley Way or through the Market Square and along West Street.
- 3.2 Traffic travelling through the Market Square along West Street inevitably conflicts with other road users seeking to find free short term spaces in the Market Square. This causes more congestion in the Town Centre than might otherwise be the case, if there was an alternative access to Back Lane car park.
- 3.3 This situation was discussed by the Town Centre Working Group and it was concluded that a new "in only" access to the car park from Locks Hill would have significant positive benefits for traffic flows in the Town.
- 3.4 Locks Hill is an adopted highway and is separated from Back Lane car park by a narrow strip of land. An Ordnance Survey extract is attached as Appendix 1 to this report that illustrates the situation.

- 3.5 The proposed new arrangement would be to join the adopted highway with the car park to create a new entrance. Several car parking spaces would be lost as a result of this change, but given the overall levels of usage of the car park, this is not considered to be an issue.
- 3.6 With the provision of new signing to direct traffic to the car park entrance, it is expected that there will be a reduction in the number of vehicles travelling through the Market Square and along West Street, reducing conflict and congestion. In addition, with the current entrance on Back Lane being made an "exit only", conflicting traffic movements at the bottom of West Street should be reduced.
- 3.7 At the time of writing this report, the ownership of the narrow strip of land separating the adopted highway of Locks Hill from the car park is not clear. Initial investigations indicated that the land was in the ownership of Rochford Council. However, there is a suggestion that a third party may have ownership interests and this issue is currently being investigated.

4 COMMENTS

- 4.1 Notwithstanding the question mark over ownership of the strip of land between Locks Hill and the car park, it is considered that the proposed arrangements for access and egress from Back Lane car park merit support.
- 4.2 If a third party ownership is confirmed between Locks Hill and the car park, it is hoped a solution can be reached by negotiation to enable the new access to be provided. If that proves not to be the case, then a report would be brought back to Members for further consideration. Any update on the ownership situation will be reported to the meeting.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A reduction in traffic movements through the Market Square and along West Street to access Back Lane Car Park would have significant environmental benefits for the Town Centre.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The sum of £15,000 is available in 2002/03 through the County Council's Local Transport Plan for traffic management initiatives in Rochford Town Centre.

7 RECOMMENDATION

That Members determine whether to support the proposals for new access arrangements to Back Lane Car Park, as outlined in the report. (HPS)

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Background Papers:

None

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Appendix 1

