

# Stafford Road – Car Park

## Housing Committee Thursday, 23 November 2023

Report of: Head of Housing

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Purpose: For decision

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Publication status: Open

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Wards affected: All

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### Executive summary:

This report seeks approval for the potential development of a new car park to the rear of block 224 – 270 Stafford Road, Caterham. This car park would provide a maximum of 15 bays to assist with the reduction of on street parking at the front of the scheme and allow the inclusion of safe passing spaces and traffic calming measures by Surrey County Council.

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**This report supports the Council’s priority of:** Creating the homes, infrastructure, and environment we need.

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### Recommendation to Committee:

Members are recommended to approve one of the following recommendations:

- A. Approve the development of a car park at Stafford Road, Caterham to provide up to 15 spaces for use by local residents and approve a budget of £350,000 for its development plus a contingency fund of up to £50,000 for unplanned costs associated with inflation.
- B. Decline the proposals to develop a car park at Stafford Road and the associated budget for the work and, ask Officers to revert back to Surrey County Council regarding alternative options for traffic and parking measures on the highway.

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## **Reason for recommendation:**

Residents have raised concerns with local ward Councillors regarding the number of vehicles parking on the highway to the front of properties 224 – 270 Stafford Road.

Residents have raised concerns of damage to vehicles, altercations between motorists and concerns for safety because of poor lines of sight due to vehicles parking on both sides of the road.

Discussions with Surrey County Council regarding reduced speed limits, additional traffic calming measures and allocated passing spaces have not assisted with providing a solution to the issues raised by residents.

Given the unsuccessful discussions, a feasibility study and survey was commissioned by the Council to ascertain whether parking could be provided at the rear of the scheme to remove vehicles from the road and allow the County Council to provide passing spaces on their highway.

Following the completion of a feasibility study and completion of architectural drawings an anticipated budget of £350,000 would be required to provide a maximum of 15 parking bays. This cost has been provided as an estimate and would be subject to a full and proper procurement process in accordance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

Plans of the existing site are provided in appendix A and proposed plans for the site are provided at appendix B.

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### **1.0 Introduction and background**

- 1.1 In 2015 Stafford Road was re-designated from Sheltered to General Needs accommodation. Up until this point very few residents owned or had access to a vehicle due to the accommodation type and the age restrictions on sheltered accommodation being 65 plus.
- 1.2 Since 2015, the properties have been used as family accommodation with vehicle ownership significantly increasing over the years without sufficient parking provision being made. Private properties on the opposite side of the road also park their vehicles on the highway which contributes to and exacerbates the situation.
- 1.3 Due to the number of properties within the area and the inability for both tenants and private homeowners to park off the road, both sides of the highway are occupied by vehicles, leaving just enough space for single file traffic. At very busy periods, generally evenings and weekends, this can stretch up to lengths of 300 meters without passing space.
- 1.4 Residents of this section in Stafford Road have reported various incidents that have happened as a result of the parking issues. It is reported that parked vehicles have been damaged due to the narrowness of the road,

altercations have taken place between drivers arguing over who is going to give way, speed of vehicles and emergency vehicles and refuse lorries have not been able to pass.

- 1.5 To increase the width of the road, residents park their vehicles half on, half off the pavement forcing pedestrians to walk on the road with pushchairs, buggies, and small children.
- 1.6 Various meetings have taken place over the past year between Local Ward/ County Council Councillors, Surrey County Council and Tandridge District Council. Discussions have focused on traffic calming measures such as speed restrictions, speed humps, passing spaces and making Stafford Road a one-way street. Monitoring of the street by Surrey County Council has indicated that speed samples have not met the requirements to consider a reduced speed limit or speed humps. A one-way system is not an option due to Stafford Road being an entry and exit road from Caterham town centre and the creating of passing spaces along the stretch of road is not possible due to the number of vehicles parked at any given time.

## **2.0 Feasibility study of potential car park**

- 2.1 Due to the above considerations not being viable for Surrey County Council to remedy the issues, a feasibility study has been undertaken to investigate the potential to develop a car park for local residents at the rear of 270 Stafford Road. Access to the car park would be via the service road to the recreational ground between 270 and 272 Stafford Road.
- 2.2 Development of the car park does not come without its own challenges. Access to the car park is via a very steep service road leading down to the recreational ground, the recreational ground currently cannot be developed as it is held on statutory trust in favour of the public. The access road is currently a single access and passing spaces will be required to make the access road a viable option. The verges on both sides of the road are banked and will require significant in filling. A pedestrian path will also be required to enable safe access to and from the car park on foot. The land to be used for the car park is currently occupied by way of rear gardens by two residents, this would mean reducing the size of the gardens and potentially financially compensating the residents. There will need to be additional lighting plus security measures by way of barrier and/ or a car park permit scheme monitored by a third party. Completing this work will create a maximum of 15 parking spaces and will remove the same from the highway.
- 2.3 Estimated costs obtained from the architect would suggest a budget of £350,000 is required to complete the work plus a £50k contingency. This would be funded through additional borrowing by the Housing Revenue Account via the Public Works Loan Board.

### **3.0 Resident Consultation**

- 3.1 Residents within the block comprising 224 – 270 Stafford Road have been visited by Officers to scope the potential use of the car park if it were provided. A total of 15 residents responded to the visits with the majority advising that they would only consider using the car park if it were cheap to do so, was well lit and was safe and secure by installation of CCTV.
- 3.2 To facilitate the car park an existing resident will be required to relinquish the use of their garden. It is important for Members to understand that for the development to proceed, this resident will be required to relinquish the use of the garden voluntarily. Should this not be agreeable the resident cannot be forced to relinquish the use of the garden without the Council's use of Compulsory Purchase Order powers. S.226 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides the Council with the power to acquire land compulsorily for development and other planning purposes as defined in section 246(1) of the 1990 Act. This power is intended to provide a tool to help acquiring authorities with planning powers to assemble land where this is necessary and where strong planning justifications for the use of the power exist. CPOs must be demonstrable in the public interest. The Government's guidance on CPO "Guidance on Compulsory purchase process and The Crichel Down Rules" (July 2019) confirms that compulsory purchase is intended as a last resort measure to secure the assembly of all the land needed for the implementation of projects and acquiring authorities will be required to demonstrate that they have taken reasonable steps to acquire all of the land and rights included in the CPO by agreement. Whilst this is the case, it is typical for a CPO to be pursued in parallel with negotiation with landowners such that the option is progressed in case it is required.
- 3.3 During the visits, residents were asked if they would consider paying a weekly charge for allocated use of the car park. A fee of £10.00 per week was recommended but only one resident felt that this was affordable. Two residents have since advised that they would be willing to pay £5.00 per week for a parking space. Due to the low weekly charge, the payback period for the borrowed funds will be considerable. This consultation was only conducted with the tenants occupying the block 224 – 270. Consultation could be extended to the private households on the opposite side of Stafford Road should Members decide to approve the recommendation to proceed with the project.

### **4.0 Other options considered**

- 4.1 In addition to the options considered in this report, thought has been given to implementing a Zip Car scheme from a nearby garage site. While this may be possible in the future, it is unlikely to be able to provide a solution to the issue in a reasonable timeframe.

## **5.0 Consultation**

5.1 Consultation with the residents in block 224 – 270 Stafford Road has been completed and generated mixed opinion on whether the car park was the right solution. If the scheme is approved by Members, further consultation will be required with both the residents of the block and the wider residents of Stafford Road.

## **Key implications**

### **Comments of the Chief Finance Officer**

The Housing Revenue capital programme could be increased to accommodate the proposed new car park and would be able to fund the new scheme. However in doing so there would be less funds available to put towards the Council development programme and or other capital schemes.

### **Comments of the Head of Legal Services**

Where negotiation to acquire land by agreement is not successful, the use of compulsory purchase powers may need to be considered. However, compulsory purchase does involve removing private rights. Under article 1 to the first protocol of the European Convention on Human Rights any such interference with private rights must be proportionate and in the public interest. Compulsory purchase is likely to be justified where land is firmly required for a scheme to which the Council is committed. As set out in this report, Officers are committed to deliver this scheme under an agreement with the respective landowners and without recourse to the use of compulsory purchase powers. CPO is, and would remain a position of last resort, if and where it proves unable to acquire the land through agreement.

## **Equality**

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed for the purpose of this report. Consideration has been given to the use of the car park by residents with physical disabilities who may not be able to enter and exit the car park by foot due to the gradient of the access road. This has been mitigated by using an anti-slip surface, inclusion of a pedestrian footpath and handrail.

Consideration should be given to those residents who will suffer loss of garden space, as a result of the car park using land currently occupied by residents for private garden use.

## **Climate change**

There are no significant environmental / sustainability implications associated with this report.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Existing site plan

Appendix B – Proposed site plan

## **Background papers**

None

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