

**HELENSBURGH WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT – CAR PARKING**

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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The development of Helensburgh Waterfront has been a long term project designed to provide a new and high quality leisure development, repurposing a car park and associated assets, improve coastal defences and provide commercial opportunities for retail development. The development as a concept was identified in the masterplan for the wider site which was subsequently agreed at the Council meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012.
- 1.2 Construction of the leisure centre is now complete and the facility open. Discussions relating to the operation of the car park, the charging regime and associated parking management have been ongoing for some time. Originally it had been proposed that the car park would be fully charging using the standard hourly rate for off street car parks. In July this year Commercial Services, as part of the emerging management plan for the leisure complex and following representations from Live Argyll, sought a proposal for all of the Pier Head car park to be free for the first 2 hours with charging thereafter. This proposal has been made to help to ensure that the leisure development operates to intended capacity, provides an incentive for individuals to use the facility and encourages users, who need to travel by car, to park near to the leisure facility rather than occupying on street parking spaces nearby. The parking proposal also supports recent advice received relating to the retail element of the development.
- 1.3 Local Members have been briefed via a Business Day Meeting on the proposals for making the car park free for 2 hours and are broadly supportive of this. To introduce a free parking period would be a change in Policy requiring agreement by Council. The projected difference in parking income being some £24,000 less than the income received prior to the development commencing.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that Council:
- (i) Agrees that the Helensburgh Waterfront car park be amended to provide free parking for the first 2 hours and charged thereafter and;
  - (ii) Agrees that officers progress a Traffic Regulation Order covering the new car park with the flexibility to enable free parking for the first 2 hours with any representations received during the TRO process being reported back to the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee.

**3.0 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The development of Helensburgh Waterfront is a key project for the council. As the

construction of the new Leisure Centre has concluded, the site of the old pool, once demolished, will be available for development. This development proposal aligns with the masterplan for the wider site which was agreed at the council meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012. As part of the agreed proposal this area of the site is proposed to be developed for retail use of around 2,700sqm.

- 3.2 As part of the first phase of development at the waterfront, a car park extending to 265 spaces has been constructed as shown on the plan attached as Appendix 1. It was initially intended that this car park will be operated as a pay for car park by the Council with income being included as part of the Council's overall revenue budget. The car park forms an important parking asset within Helensburgh. The wider parking strategy for Helensburgh and the whole of Argyll and Bute is subject to an ongoing parking review exercise which will be presented to Members once concluded.
- 3.3 The new layout and car park replaces the original larger Pier Head car park which provided a mix of free car parking of approximately 320 spaces and had an additional 236 chargeable spaces. It had originally been proposed that any loss of spaces resulting from the Waterfront Development would be from the free parking area at the far end of the car park and that the new car park would be chargeable to replace the previous car park facility and to maintain the budgeted income. The car park serves the wider town centre and not just the new Waterfront Development. In regards to traffic management, the use of on and off street parking places needs to be considered holistically to help to ensure that there is a reasonable turnover of parking spaces available to support local business by providing parking opportunities.
- 3.4 There have been ongoing discussions relating to the operation of the car park, the charging regime and associated management for some time. Originally it had been proposed that the car park would be fully charging using the standard hourly rate for off street car parks. In July this year Commercial Services, sought a proposal for the new car park to be free for the first 2 hours and charging thereafter. The rationale for this is to help to ensure that the leisure development operates well, provides an incentive for users and encourages users of the facility to park near to the leisure facility rather than occupying on street parking spaces nearby.
- 3.5 The current fees and charges policy for 2022-23 and the Council's Parking Policy does not enable any change to charges within the Waterfront car park. Any proposed change would therefore need to be agreed by Council as a policy change.
- 3.6 Consideration will also have to be given to enforcement and management of the 2 hour free charging period as staff would need to be there more frequently to ensure the car park was being used correctly and not abused, which could ultimately have a detrimental effect on the traffic management of the development and town centre areas, as vehicles staying there for long periods would displace other vehicles into the town centre due to a lack of turnover of spaces. This will require additional patrols and place extra demand on a small enforcement team covering other areas including tourist hot spots such as Luss, Duck Bay and Arrochar. This was previously highlighted as part of the response to the planning application in August 2018. It may be necessary to increase the amount of warden coverage to accommodate any additional demand.
- 3.7 The 2 hours free parking would require the driver/occupant of the vehicle to obtain a ticket which would confirm the date and time of arrival. The first 2 hours would be free with any additional parking incurring the standard parking charge. Additional topping up could be

carried out remotely using the Council's parking App or a ticket purchased for the duration of the intended stay when this would exceed 2 hours.

3.8 The new Leisure Centre will be operated by the Leisure Trust who have raised the following concerns if the car park is operated as a standard chargeable parking area:

3.8.1 **Memberships:** The Leisure Trust require to increase use and membership of the facility to cover operational costs. The Leisure Trust have advised that standard parking charges will result in an estimated reduction in income from memberships equating to £30,000 to £100,000 per year depending on the level of parking charges.

3.8.2 **Staff:** The Leisure Trust have requested that staff are provided with access to free employee car parking as this is the case across most Leisure Trust facilities (such as halls, community centres and some leisure facilities).

3.9 The other significant use proposed for the Waterfront Site is a commercial development of predominantly retail use on the site of the old swimming pool. As part of the early site assessments specialist retail advisors Avison Young have confirmed that food retailers in particular will not be interested in the retail site unless they have a minimum of 2 hours free parking for customers.

3.10 **Possible Options for managing the car park include the following:**

3.10.1 **Restricted free period – 2 hours free:** A compromise position, and one which aligns with the recent request from Commercial Services in response to requests from Live Argyll and commercial retail advisors is that a period of 2 hours offered free with charges applying thereafter. This supports both the Leisure Centre members and the retail development while still managing the car park, avoiding anti-social issues and all day parking. However this would result in a substantial drop in income to the Council from parking revenues estimated at £24,000 pa, this would require a corresponding reduction in the budgeted parking income to avoid a deficit. This may be balanced by increased income for the Leisure Trust from memberships (estimated at £30,000 per year minimum) and income from the retail development. Roads and Infrastructure have also advised that this type of parking would be more difficult and time consuming to enforce and would require a review of the current warden service to ensure adequate enforcement. To facilitate this a TRO amendment process will be required and only when this is successful would the Council be able to waive charges for the first 2 hours. Appendix 2 details the TRO process.

3.10.2 **Standard parking charges:** This would generate the most income from parking (estimated at a minimum of £30,000pa at the Pier Head but could be substantially more) and would see the remaining paid for car parks continue much the same. However, based on the representation from Live Argyll would result in a consequent loss of income from the Leisure Centre (estimated at a minimum of £30,000 per year). It should be noted here that the current budget income for the Council is based on this figure and any change to the parking charges needs to be agreed as part of the Council's budgeted income.

3.10.3 **Free car parking** – This may be a popular choice for the local community however, this would remove the income historically generated from parking and make the remaining pay car parks less attractive. The loss in income is estimated to be around £50,000 to £60,000 pa across all the charging Helensburgh car parks. This could also lead to a situation where neither the Leisure Centre nor the retail units benefitted, as the

spaces could be taken by commuters, workers and other all day parking. This would then lead to traffic management issues in and around the town centre of Helensburgh as local residents and visitors search for a parking space.

3.11 In budgetary terms it is considered that the balance between gaining parking income for the Council and losing Leisure Trust income may well suggest that standard parking charges doesn't generate a significant overall financial benefit.

3.12 However in operational terms, deciding not to operate standard parking charges could have other impacts such as:

- Pressure from other towns / Members across Argyll for similar arrangements which could lead to a wider impact on parking management and income.
- Increased resources from council enforcement staff with increasingly limited financial returns.
- Providing free parking encourages car use which is at odds with the council's climate change targets. However this could be countered by the argument that parking charges may cause users to drive further to Dumbarton or other centres with free parking.

3.13 Similarly free car parking isn't a recommended option as this will lead to spaces being blocked by all day users / businesses, vehicles being abandoned and a disruption to the overall parking strategy.

3.14 Therefore the option which is considered to offer the best compromise is a managed car park with a restricted free period. This isn't without some compromise, particularly for the Council with a loss of budgeted income of over £24k from its annual budget and increased demand on limited parking management resource.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

4.1 The waterfront retail site is of strategic importance to the council and to Helensburgh and therefore the operation of the communal car park requires to be carefully considered.

4.2 To ensure that the new leisure facility is a success and that the retail site can be marketed the option of a restricted free period of 2 hours parking is considered to offer the best compromise.

4.3 The impact of the above proposal would reduce potential parking income for the Council by approximately £24k per annum. This would need to be taken into account with a corresponding reduction to parking income required to be recognised in budgeted income levels along with the increased resources required to manage the operation of the car park.

## **5.0 IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Policy – the proposal for 2 hours free parking require Council approval due to the predicted reduction in parking income.

- 5.2 Financial – Budgeted council income from parking in the Helensburgh area will be reduced by these proposals and this pressure will be built into the budget outlook from 2023-24 onwards.
- 5.3 Legal - The terms and conditions of any management arrangements to follow are intended to be delegated to the Executive Director of Customer Services.
- 5.4 HR – Additional demands on parking warden/enforcement resource.
- 5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty
- 5.5.1 Equalities – Protected characteristics – None Known
- 5.5.2 Socio economic Duty – None Known
- 5.5.3 Islands – None Known
- 5.6 Climate change – Any large development project will have sustainability issues to address. However this development is designed to deliver local services to reduce the need for residents to travel to other destinations which will be a positive impact. Offering free car parking periods can be seen as contradictory to this but is balanced by reducing travel to other further away destinations. There are a number of cycle parking racks available at the leisure development and it would be desirable if users of the facility would transition their mode of travel to active travel choice rather than relying on car travel. There are also a number of e-vehicle charging points on the car park which will be reserved specifically for e-vehicle use.
- 5.7 Risk – If the car parking is not managed correctly there is a risk that the new leisure and retail facilities will not deliver the anticipated outcomes. There is also a risk that the overall parking arrangements in Helensburgh will be distorted if the parking arrangements are not holistically addressed.
- 5.8 Customer Service – None.

**Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director with responsibility for Roads and Infrastructure Services**

**Councillor Gary Mulvaney – Policy Lead, Finance and Commercial Services**

**Councillor Andrew Kain – Policy Lead, Roads and Transport**

24<sup>th</sup> August 2022

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Layout Plan

Appendix 2 – TRO Process

## **For further information contact:**

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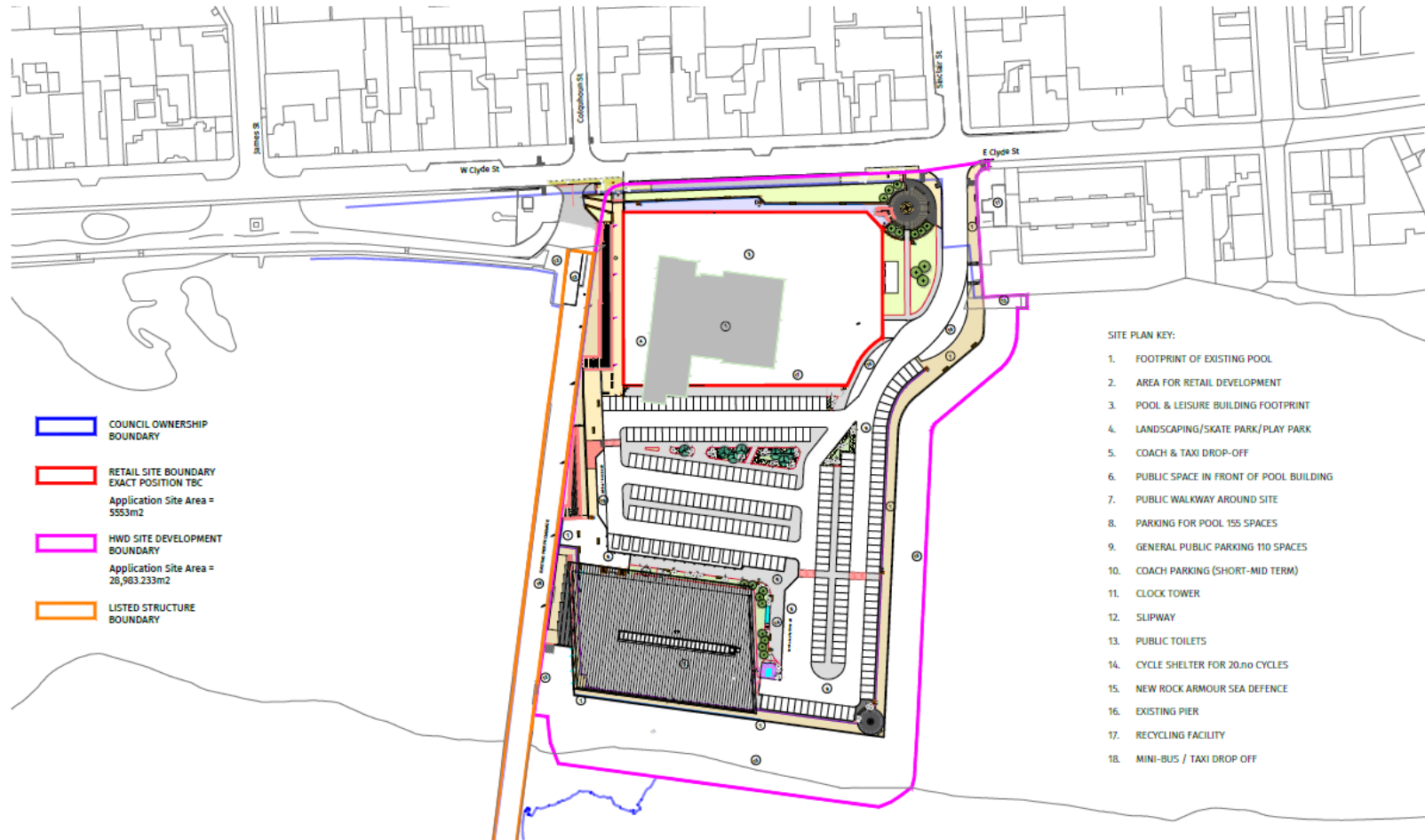
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# APPENDIX 1 – LAYOUT PLAN

## EXISTING SITE

DB3



**SITE PLAN KEY:**

1. FOOTPRINT OF EXISTING POOL
2. AREA FOR RETAIL DEVELOPMENT
3. POOL & LEISURE BUILDING FOOTPRINT
4. LANDSCAPING/SKATE PARK/PLAY PARK
5. COACH & TAXI DROP-OFF
6. PUBLIC SPACE IN FRONT OF POOL BUILDING
7. PUBLIC WALKWAY AROUND SITE
8. PARKING FOR POOL 155 SPACES
9. GENERAL PUBLIC PARKING 110 SPACES
10. COACH PARKING (SHORT-MID TERM)
11. CLOCK TOWER
12. SLIPWAY
13. PUBLIC TOILETS
14. CYCLE SHELTER FOR 20,000 CYCLES
15. NEW ROCK ARMOUR SEA DEFENCE
16. EXISTING PIER
17. RECYCLING FACILITY
18. MINI-BUS / TAXI DROP OFF

## TRO Process

1. Pre non-statutory discussions with local groups to develop proposals.
2. Seek agreement from Helensburgh & Lomond Area Committee to begin statutory TRO process.
3. Stage 1 Consultation – defined by Regulations. Seeks comments only at this stage.
4. Stage 2 Consultation – defined by Regulations but note that the Traffic Authority should consult with all those “affected” by the proposals. This allows Officers to include other “non-statutory” bodies which may be affected by the proposed TRO. Seeks comments only at this stage.
5. Stage 3 Consultation – public consultation exercise. At this stage any person, body or organisation may submit an objection. Officers then respond to objections, however, if an objection is not formally (in writing) withdrawn then it must be considered extant.
6. If no objections are received the Order can be made.
7. If objections are submitted and not withdrawn a report will be taken to the Area Committee for consideration. The following options are available to the Committee:
  - a. To abandon the Order;
  - b. To amend the Order;
  - c. To hold Discretionary Hearing;
  - d. To make the Order as published.
8. Notwithstanding the above, if an objection is submitted in regards to certain key restrictions (for example “no loading”) then the Committee has the following options:
  - a. To remove the restriction from the Order;
  - b. To abandon the Order
  - c. To refer the Order to an Independent Reporter for a Hearing (different from a “Discretionary Hearing”). The Reporter submits recommendations back to the Area Committee at the conclusion of the process for consideration.
9. At the end of the processes detailed in points 7 & 8 above, assuming the Members determine that the Order should be made, the Order is then Signed and Sealed by Legal & Regulatory Support.
10. There is then a 6 week “pause” to allow for procedural challenge to be made.
11. Assuming no such challenge is made, the Order is implemented.