



## **North Devon Council**

Report Date: 16<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Topic: Lynbridge car park - Lynton

Report by: SarahJane Mackenzie-Shapland; Head of Place, Property and Regeneration

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. This report pertains to the Lynbridge car park, Lynton. This car park is owned by North Devon Council but managed by Lynton and Lynmouth Town Council as part of an Agency agreement between the two Council's.
- 1.2. The car park provides 10 car parking spaces, which are let annually to local residents as part of a permit scheme. These cost £200 per annum and so generate £2000 income to the Council each year.
- 1.3. A structural survey was commissioned and has found the car park to be unsafe. It advised that the elevated section of the car park should not be used until such time as investigations have established the adequacy of the concrete deck and that appropriate vehicle barriers have been installed.
- 1.4. As a result the car park was closed on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> February for severe health and safety reasons. The condition of the surface, edge protection and the structure itself required investigation to establish the integrity of the car park. Permit holders and local members were advised that such investigations would take time and that we could not give any indication of the timescales involved or the likely outcome of these inspections.
- 1.5. Officers have since carried out further investigations and this report provides members with our options going forward together with officer's preferred option.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. That it is recommended to Council that we proceed with option 4 and offer the land to the Town Council or community, disclosing the concerns with the structure,
- 2.2. If after a period of 6 months it is clear that there is no interest in the land then we proceed with option 2 and demolish the structure without replacing it.
- 2.3. That subject to 2.1 and 2.2, Council vary the capital programme by £100,000 in order that the structure can be demolished and the area made safe.

### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1. This report has considered 4 options:
- 3.2. Option 1: Carry out further investigation works to inform next steps. A quote of £46,000 has been received. Given that the structural survey has already

suggested that the structure is at/or near end of life, this is not justified as value for money.

- 3.3. Option 2: Demolish the structure and make good the area. This is costed at approximately £100,000. This would make the area safe and remove any health and safety concerns.
- 3.4. Option 3: Would replace the structure and re-provide the parking spaces for local residents. This has been costed at approximately £500,000. Whilst it is appreciated that this would re-provide the spaces for local residents, your officers do not consider that such spend can be justified as value for money.
- 3.5. Option 4: Transfer the asset to Lynton and Lynmouth Town Council or local residents.
- 3.6. It is not clear whether there would be interest from either the Town Council or local residents, but it is considered that this should be the first option explored ensuring that Lynton Town Council and the local residents are fully aware of the associated risk. If this option does not bring about any interest then given the costs associated with the alternative options, Option 2 is considered the most appropriate way forward. This would remove the structure and make good the area at a cost of £100,000. This removes any health and safety concerns but does not re-provide the 10 car parking spaces on the site.

#### 4. REPORT

- 4.1. Lynbridge car park occupies an elevated position adjacent the Lyn river. The car park structure is located to the southern edge of the main road and the undercroft of the car park has a steep slope (approximately 35 degrees) down towards the river. The car park is located next to a public house but parking is reserved for neighbouring residents only. The public house has its own parking which is sited at a lower level adjacent to the river.
- 4.2. The car park consists of a tarmacadam surface laid over a reinforced concrete slab which spans left to right between the cross beams which extend from the roadside out to the rear steel columns. The cross beams are formed with steel beams (Universal Beams) encased in concrete. The perimeter of the car park has a 230 mm deep concrete upstand with steel handrails set at a height of 1.0 metres above the car park level. The handrails are formed with small squared steel section and show signs of light to medium corrosion both to the main members and their connections to the concrete beams.



Photograph 1 shows a view of the elevated car park from footbridge



Photograph 2 shows the surface level of the Car park and identifies its use for reserved residential use only. The adjacent public house can be seen in the background and has separate car parking for patrons.



Photograph 3 shows a typical cross section of supporting framework underneath the surface of the car park

4.3. The car park was built in approximately 1952 and a structural survey was commissioned ten years ago. Unfortunately, a copy of that report is not available but it concluded that remedial works involving the installation of new internal columns, beams and bracing members were required. It is noted that the perimeter columns along the rear of the car park were retained and have been painted with anti-corrosive paint. The new internal steel columns have been positioned against the existing columns and are supported on top of the original footings which are founded into the underlying rock formation. The bases of the perimeter columns are now encased with a new concrete plinth laid over the top of the existing footings.

4.4. The more recent report inspected all areas which could be viewed at ground level and from accessible areas. Those parts of the structure which were concealed such as the car park deck, encased steel beams or the foundations were not inspected unless the report identified otherwise.

4.5. Based upon its findings, the report made a number of recommendations:

- 1) The elevated section of the car park **should not be used** until such time investigations have established the adequacy of the concrete deck and that appropriate vehicle barriers have been installed. We are mindful of the disruption this will cause to the residents but we cannot at this stage provide assurances on the safety of the car park. The roadside parking spaces adjacent to and over the plinth which supports the suspended concrete deck can be used.

- 2) The investigations and subsequent remedial works to the concrete deck should be carried out by a specialist sub-contractor. Due to the sloping ground in the under-croft, access scaffolding / platforms are to be provided to enable close quarter inspection. The investigations should include concrete coring to establish the strength of the concrete and the use of a “Schmidt” rebound hammer which will assess the soundness and consistency of the concrete throughout. The use of cover meters will establish and address the issue over adequate concrete cover to the slab reinforcement.
  - 3) The steelwork exhibiting signs of corrosion is to be repaired. This will be a site-based operation and will consist of chipping, scrapping by hand, sand blasting or mechanical power tools to remove the paint and rust back to sound base metal. The surface should be cleaned of any dirt and grease and then painted with a specialist anti corrosive paint system compatible with the exposed coastal environment. Any defective bolts are to be removed and replaced with bolts of similar grade and size. A method statement will be required for this element of works to prevent overloading of the reduced bolt connection in the temporary condition.
  - 4) The upstand section of the concrete edge is deemed unsuitable for vehicle impact and the installation of Armco type barriers is recommended. These are to be secured on concrete plinths tied to the main deck.
  - 5) The rainwater outlets to the rear of the car park are to be reworked such that the outlets extend beyond the face of the concrete to prevent erosion of the concrete face. An inspection of the exterior face will determine whether any concrete repairs will be required.
  - 6) The handrails and balustrades sections should be cleaned and / or replaced along with the fixings to the concrete edge / perimeter beams.
  - 7) A final point for consideration, **the original structure is approaching 70 years** old and it is **not uncommon** for buildings / structures to have been designed **for a “design life” of 50 years**. Should the outcome of the investigations prove to be unfavourable such that the cost of remedial works and the issue of long term and frequent maintenance become cost prohibitive, there is an option to demolish the existing deck and steel frame down to the existing footings and then reconstruct with a new deck, steel frame and integral barriers on the existing foundations. The new built will conform to the current British Standards and the specification for the concrete and steel elements will address the corrosion aspects of the coastal environmental.
- 4.6. Given these findings, North Devon Council advised Lynton and Lynmouth Town Council that the car park would be shut from Monday 14<sup>th</sup> February

2022. Letters were issued to permit holders and the closure was publicised in a press release and shared on social media.

4.7. Following the closure, officers sought a quote for additional investigative works to inform our decision making. This started with an additional site visit by the structural engineer (partly to assess whether a part of the car park could remain open to allow some of the spaces to be used) and they concluded:

*'However, the ease in which the concrete became detached from the probed soffit and the degree of corrosion in the exposed reinforcement is such that we cannot provide assurances on the structural adequacy of the car park deck. The corrosion of reinforcement in the shallow slab (believed to be 150 mm deep) significantly reduces the strength capacity of the slab. The discoloration of several areas of the soffit, similar to the area probed above suggests that corrosive salts / chlorides are having a deleterious effect on the concrete deck. There is also concern over the capacity of the upstand to safely resist vehicle impact and as such the car park should not be used until such time further investigation and remedial works are carried out.'*

4.8. A further quote was then sought for additional investigation works. This came back at £46,000.

4.9. Given the cost of these investigative works, officers considered it necessary to prepare an internal report to understand our options for this structure. Our Senior Engineer has now completed this initial assessment and concluded that there are 4 options:

<b>Option 1</b>	Undertake further testing of the structure as per the report dated 01/03/22 to determine its structural integrity and whether it has now come to end of life or can be repaired sufficiently to afford continued use as intended. Further testing as per the recommendations are likely to be expensive and will no doubt highlight additional issues with the structure, and may not tell us anything more than we are already aware of. Elements of the structure have deteriorated to a point that the report deems it currently unsafe to use as a car park, as well as sub-standard safety measures that would also need to be addressed. All have a cost implication to bring the structure to standard.	£46,000 for concrete testing alone, without consideration to the structure
<b>Option 2</b>	Remove the structure in its entirety, and make the area safe, thus removing any H&S risk, and any continued liability to the Authority. This does mean that we are no longer able to offer residents permit parking	£100,000 for demolition
<b>Option 3</b>	Remove the structure, and replace with a smaller one to enable some reduced off road parking. This is also likely to be expensive due to the topography and may be cost prohibitive	Estimated £500,000
<b>Option 4</b>	Offer the car park to Lynton and Lynmouth Town Council or the residents, but ensure that the Council/residents are aware of the associated risk.	Transfer of land

4.10. The structure is 70 years old and is situated in a coastal environment.

Visual inspections have proven that elements of it are in poor condition and potentially in stages of failure, and it will continue to deteriorate without intervention. The structural engineer has also reported that in addition to the structural issues, there is some undermining of the deck that will also need attention going forward.

4.11. Officers are aware of social media concerns that the car park has not been suitably maintained. Works were carried out in 2010 to try to preserve the structure, but with any structure of this nature it has an economic and structural life. The structure itself is made up of various components, all of which must work together to maintain the structural integrity. There are now issues which each of these elements.

4.12. The costs of the investigative works alone are significant before we are able to understand the cost of any mitigation works on a structure that is of an age that could be considered end of life.

4.13. Whilst the loss of parking for residents is regrettable, the cost of replacing the structure, estimated at £500,000 is significant and the cost of providing this facility for these residents which only generates an annual income to the Council of £2,000 per annum has to be balanced against the wider impact that this would have on the Council's financial position. The borrowing costs alone for the investment, over a 50-year period would cost the Council £22,000 per year and therefore unfortunately is not a viable investment proposal.

4.14. In the first instance, we could explore option 4 and identify whether either the Town Council or community would wish to take on the land, in the knowledge of the associated risk.

4.15. If there is no interest in the land from either the Town Council or local residents then given the age of the structure, its state of repair and the cost of investigative works/replacement of the structure, your officers consider that we should progress with option 2 and remove the structure.

## 5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1. The works will require resource from the Property, Place and Regeneration Service together with the teams within legal and finance.

5.2. If we proceed with option 2 then the works will require significant financial resource as set out in the main body of the report.

## 6. EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

6.1. The recommendation in the report would lead to the loss of 10 car parking spaces currently used by local residents. This has had to be balanced against the financial implications of securing this provision into the future.

## 7. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

7.1. An Environmental Assessment will be completed for this project.

## 8. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

8.1. What impact, positive or negative, does the subject of this report have on:

8.1.1. The commercialisation agenda:

The report has had to consider the implications on the financial position of the Council and this has been highlighted in the report.

8.1.2. Improving customer focus

The recommendation within the report removes parking provision for 10 residents but decision to close the car park in the short term was to protect the health and safety of these customers and the recommendation is made balancing the impact that this decision would have on those 10 spaces versus the impact that the spend required to restore parking for these customers would have on our ability to service our remaining customers.

8.1.3. Regeneration or economic development



The removal of the structure would have a marginally positive impact on the local environment.

## 9. CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

9.1. Article of Part 3 Annex 1 paragraph: 1(a) and (b)

9.2. Referred or delegated power: Referred

## 10. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

## 11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report.

## 12. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers:

Cllr John Patrinos – Ward member

Cllr Ian Roome – Lead member for Resources and Commercialisation

Cllr Malcolm Prowse – Lead member for Economic Development and Strategic Planning policy

Jon Triggs – Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive

Simon Fuller – Senior Solicitor

Nikki Gordon – Head of Organisational Development

Helen Bond – Property Manager

Tara Jenkins – Senior Engineer