

To: Cabinet
Date: 10 August 2022
Report of: Executive Director (Development)
Title of Report: Ice Rink Future Parking Provision

Summary and recommendations

Purpose of report: To seek release of the requirement in the OxWED LLP Members Agreement to make provision in the investment plan for parking at the ice rink, to allow the City Council to lease or purchase OxWED land for car parking.

Key decision: No

Cabinet Member: Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery and Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks

Corporate Priority: Enable an Inclusive Economy; Support Thriving Communities; and Pursue a zero carbon Oxford.

Policy Framework: Council Strategy 2020-2024; Adopted Local Plan Policy SP2.

Recommendations: That Cabinet resolves to:

1. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Corporate Property to approve, following verification of the costs, that the City Council release the requirement in the LLP Members Agreement with OxWED to make provision in their investment plan for parking at the ice rink, based on the fact that the likely worst case scenario in meeting the ice rink's minimum car parking provision (removal of the ramp and using the space to provide car parking) is likely to be more affordable than providing those spaces on OxWED land;
2. **Delegate authority**, if recommendation 1 is agreed, to the Head of Corporate Property to amend the OxWED LLP Member Agreement and/or enter into an easement to secure the access rights for car parking on site at the Ice Rink;
3. **Agree** that options to provide ice rink car parking are progressed on the basis of seeking to achieve around 25 spaces in total;
4. **Agree** that the further work required on car parking options 1 to 3 (as set out in this report) is progressed through the Development Board process, using feasibility funding, to identify the best solution. A further report will come back to Cabinet on the final option chosen, together with a recommendation to Council to allocate any additional funds as appropriate.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Statement of Need
Appendix 2	Car Parking Options
Appendix 3	Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix 4 (Confidential)	Risk Register

Introduction and background

1. The Oxpens public car park adjacent to the ice rink, is currently used by visitors to the ice rink but the ice rink operator (Fusion) has no formal agreement to use this car park.
2. There are proposals to redevelop the surface car park as part of the redevelopment of the Oxpens site, which is an allocated site in the Local Plan and is currently at pre-application stage with a planning application due for submission later this year.
3. The OxWED LLP Member Agreement includes provisions which oblige the Council and Oxford West End Development Limited (as members of the OXWED LLP) to agree the land use strategy for the Oxpens site. The “land use strategy” means the type and quantum of uses to be comprised in the planning application for and the development of the Oxpens Site. OxWED had agreed to include as part of the land use strategy, provision for parking land at the ice rink (“Ice Rink Parking Provision”). The parking land would be bought or leased for car parking spaces on the OxWED land at Oxford City Council’s cost. OxWED are requesting that the Council release the Ice Rink Parking Provision as this is inconsistent with the master plan, which is seeking a car free scheme and would reduce the area for new development on the site. A decision on this is needed urgently because, if it is to be retained, the masterplan will need to be changed to accommodate the area ahead of a planning application which is to be submitted later this year.”
4. The removal of the decked car park has been undertaken, which closed the whole Oxpens car park from June until August 2022.

Proposals and options

5. OxWED is requesting that the Council makes a decision now on whether to release the requirement it has for land for car parking. A decision on this is needed urgently because, if car parking is to be provided as part of the new scheme, the masterplan will need to be changed to accommodate the area ahead of a planning application, which is to be submitted later this year. A masterplan fix is needed in August to inform detailed work, including the Environmental Impact Assessment of the OxWED planning application.
6. Given the value of the Oxpens site, the cost of providing this car park, which would fall to the City Council would be significant.
7. Work has been undertaken to review alternative options for providing car parking for the ice rink that could be put in place when the Oxpens Car Park is closed. The report identifies several alternative options for consideration. Although these need further work in order to be deliverable, they provide context on what may be achieved if the

council was to take the decision to release the Ice Rink Parking Provision requirement on OxWED.

8. There has been some very early consideration of relocating the ice rink within the city over the next 10 to 15 years when the existing rink will be close to end of its functional life. Among these are early considerations as to whether the ice rink could be relocated within the OxWED development. The options for relocating the ice rink are being explored, although no conclusions from this work have yet been established. This report has been based on the scenario of the ice rink remaining in situ when the Oxpens car park closes for redevelopment. The onsite parking options identified in the report would need to be worked up in greater detail and the aim is to undertake this work so there is an implementable scheme, if needed, for when the Oxpens Car Park closes permanently. The implementation timeframe is not immediate and is likely to be two years.

The need

9. The need for car parking has been laid out by Community Services in the report attached as Appendix 1. Some key messages are:
 - The Ice Rink is generally well used by residents, both within the City and the wider sub-regional catchment area both as leisure facility but supporting social cohesion.
 - Fusion (the Operators of the ice rink) wish to keep as many car parking spaces as possible to ensure the viability of the ice rink.
 - The contract with Fusion expires in two years' time. The future management model has not yet been agreed.
 - There are at least 14 ice activity profile clubs using the ice rink, with a combined membership base of more than 400.
 - The Oxford Junior Ice Hockey (circa 150 members) is a development club with age groups from under 9 to under 20. This development club feeds in to the senior Oxford City Stars Ice Hockey Club.
 - Oxford City Stars Ice Hockey Club were established in Oxford in 1984 and play at a high level in the National Ice Hockey League Division 1. The Club have regular attendances of 300+ watching matches, relying on revenue from gate attendances to survive as a Club.
 - It is accepted that some convenient parking will be lost when the Oxpens car park is removed, although Westgate car park is opposite the site, and it is asserted that some car parking provision to serve the ice rink is necessary.
10. Community Services request the following essential groups be provided with on-site parking provision due to safeguarding reasons and heavy kit:
 - people with accessibility issues;
 - Ice rink users that are bringing heavy equipment e.g. hockey players and coaches
 - Ice skating coaches and hockey referees
 - Staff who work unsociable hours
 - Drop-off for users of the Ice Rink, i.e. parents of young skaters and those dropping off heavy equipment.
11. Other reasons that it is considered necessary is that essential groups are provided with on site parking are:

- Bus operators tend not to accept ice hockey kit as it is far too large; kit can weigh at least 40kg.
 - Park and Ride does not operate out of normal hours so does not meet the needs of those who train and use the Ice Rink overnight or early morning.
 - Those travelling by train are experiencing increased costs, as well as still having to try and carry heavy and bulky equipment if you are a member of the hockey clubs.
12. Based on this, Community Services have concluded that in the interests of both the operation and financial sustainability of the ice rink, some on-site parking needs to be provided for the groups identified at para 10 above.
13. They also advise that: -
- A coach drop off point is also required for hockey teams arriving for the c80 matches each year. This has been discussed previously and Community Services advised that a “drop off and pick up point” on Oxpens Road, as happens currently, although not ideal would be acceptable.
 - At least one “drop off and pick up point” for three large (i.e. 5/7 seater) vehicles is essential to support those travelling with heavy equipment, safe parental/guardian/other “drop off and pick up” whilst alternative parking arrangements are found and safe early, late and overnight needs.
14. Highway consultants reviewed if a coach “drop off and pick up point” on Oxpens Road could be facilitated. They have confirmed it is feasible, subject to approval from the County Council, as Highway Authority.
15. In total the Community Services paper at Appendix 1 refers to a minimum 25 parking bays as potentially being acceptable, given the compromises that need to be made. There is no design guidance from Sport England with regard to car parking for a facility of this type and design.
- The key users highlighted below will generally use the ice rink at different times. Lone skaters out of hours – 20 parking bays are considered necessary for this group
 - Ice Hockey (between 17 and 22 squad members per team) and officials – 22 parking bays are considered necessary.
 - Disabled users – There is no specific Sports England guidance. However, based on standard car parking guidance; 3 Blue badge parking bays would be a normal provision.
 - Vulnerable staff at unsocial hours – 2 spaces are assumed essential for this group
16. Hockey and other skating generally do not take place at the same time, therefore, these requirements are not in addition to one another.
17. The quantity of dedicated on-site parking for the ice rink parking will need to be kept to a minimum. This is due to space constraints, but also given the council’s priority to discourage driving private vehicles into the city centre in favour of sustainable transport modes.

18. It should be noted that the attractiveness of private parking in the ice rink area may reduce when the second phase of the Zero Emissions Zone (ZEZ) is implemented, scheduled for 2023.

Options considered to date

19. The options for limited ice rink car parking on the existing ice rink site have been explored as set out in the 3 alternative parking options, alongside the option of providing space as part of the OxWED masterplan. Should the Council opt to secure land for car parking spaces on the OxWED site, this report has assumed that the council will fund and implement the works, which is in line with the wording of the LLP Agreement.
20. The four options that have been considered are:
- 1) Formalise the existing informal on-site parking at the front of the ice rink (7 spaces)
 - 2) Provide additional car parking at the front of the ice rink (12 spaces, possible expand to 21)
 - 3) Remove ramp & provide car parking at the west of the Ice rink (up to 25 spaces)
 - 4) Exercise the option to provide car Parking on the OxWED site (up to 25 spaces)

These are set out in further detail in Appendix 2.

Conclusions

21. Of the options considered, the provision of parking on the OxWED site would be the most expensive as it would include payment for the land and the land price would reflect the potential for alternative development on the site. Having identified other options for the provision of parking on the ice rink site there has been enough work undertaken to establish that it is feasible to provide some parking and this would be a more cost effective option for the Council whilst providing the necessary provision. This parking would be conveniently located and could be controlled by the ice rink operator to ensure it was available for the groups that have been identified as having specific requirements for parking.
22. The recommendation as to the specific long term solution for car parking at the rink is not yet available. This is because more work is needed to refine both the need and the costs of the “on site” proposals and work is underway to understand the costs of any offsite overspill. This is likely to take a further 3-6 months due to further technical work needed (as set out under the options analysis) and the need to undertake pre-app discussions with the Planning Department and the Highway Authority. All of the options may be able to receive parking income to offset some of the costs. The next stage of work will explore this further.
23. There is time for the points above to be clarified as a parking provision scheme only needs to be implemented to align with the permanent closure of the Oxpens Car Park; which is still several years away. It will be important that the council works closely with OxWED so that access road designs can be designed to accommodate access to the ice rink and so that timeframes can stay aligned i.e. so the council is aware in advance of when the Oxpens Car Park is to close and have a scheme ready to implement. The Head of Corporate property will seek to amend the OxWED LLP Member Agreement and/or enter into an easement to secure the access rights for car parking on site at the Ice Rink.

Financial implications

24. A decision by Cabinet is needed as to whether the option in the agreement with OxWED is required. If the parking was required there would be a cost to the Council in securing the land and providing the spaces and this would require additional budget to be established. This would also reduce the area available for development, reducing the return to the Council through the LLP agreement.
25. The provision of more parking spaces on the ice rink site would also have a cost but would not require a land payment and all options individually and cumulatively would be lower. A budget would still be required, the details of the requirement will be established through further work on the options to establish the best all round approach to support the ice rink. This budget would not be required until the Oxpens car park closes, which is not anticipated for at least the next 2 years, and it was necessary to implement a scheme.

Legal issues

26. This report seeks agreement to advise OxWED that the council no longer require the Ice Rink Parking Provision to be included in the land use strategy for the development of the Oxpens Site to secure land for car parking on the OxWED site. Issues arising from provision of car parking around the ice rink will be addressed as part of the work to explore options further.

Level of risk

27. The confidential Risk Register is attached at Appendix 4. It is included on a confidential basis as contains commercially sensitive information.
28. The failure to make a decision on the need for spaces on the OxWED development site could delay or increase the cost of securing planning permission on the site. Making a decision now will remove the risk and enable plans to be progressed. The decision not to require the spaces on the OxWED site will also remove the financial risk arising from the need to purchase the spaces.
29. There is a risk that more detailed design and feasibility work reveals new constraints or requirements that alter timescales or costings of parking at the ice rink. However, it is considered that the risk that the alternative options would exceed the cost of the obligation within the OxWED LLP agreement is considered low.
30. The development of the approach to accommodating the minimum level of parking required removes the risk of the ice rink being left without adequate parking affecting its programmes and activities.

Equalities impact

31. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 places a duty on public authorities in the exercise of their functions to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
32. In considering the minimum level of car parking required Communities have taken account of the role of the ice rink within the community, the range of users of the ice

rink and those with protected characteristics. In providing parking on the site the parking design will incorporate blue badge spaces, as close to the entrance as feasible, in accordance with current guidance. Option 3 provides clarity of access for inclusion and spaces closest the entrance. However all options will be an improvement on the current arrangement for people needing access to blue badge spaces. This complies with the EQI initial assessment. As part of establishing agreed options a fuller EQIA will be undertaken.

Conclusion

33. It is considered that there is now enough information, subject to confirmation of land costs, to conclude that there are realistic alternatives to Option 4; which is providing car parking spaces on the OxWED site. All of the other options will be more cost efficient, even if the Council receives zero income from metering spaces and no planning contribution 64. There is a risk that delay in making the formal decision could cause financial loss to OxWED if their Masterplan development and planning programme is significantly delayed. This will impact the Council as a JV partner. It also risks being unprepared to provide alternative parking should this option is pursued.
34. In light of the above Members are recommended to delegate the decision to the Head of Corporate Property, that the Council advises OxWED that there is no requirement for parking spaces on their site, subject to verification of costs, and develops proposals to ensure there are approximately 25 spaces available to meet the needs of ice rink users with heavy equipment or accessing the facility late at night or early in the morning when the Oxpens car park closes.

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Background Papers: None

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