

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**RECORD OF DECISION OF THE LEAD MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND
INFRASTRUCTURE**

Decision Made: 21 October 2022

Proposal for improvements to King Street Car Park

Issue for Decision

The purpose of this decision is to agree improvements to King Street Car Park to improve the visual appearance of the site whilst still maintaining the biodiversity value.

Decision Made

The proposed Planting and Maintenance Scheme to improve the King Street Car Park, as detailed in the reasons for decision, be approved.

Reasons for Decision

- 1.1 In 2013, the King Street multi-storey car park was replaced with an open-air short stay car park in the heart of the town centre. The car park is considered a prime location for visitors to the County Town due to its proximity to Town Centre shops and restaurants.
- 1.2 King Street Car Park has 53 bays which generate on average £5,150 per bay per year.
- 1.3 However, since its redevelopment, the car park has lacked a managed planting scheme and has largely been left to grow wild. Whilst this offers some benefit for biodiversity and habitat creation, complaints have been received about the impression this unkempt and unstructured appearance gives to visitors. The pictures below show the overgrown vegetation along the boundary with Church Street and along the back of the car park.



Image 1: Current condition of King Street Car Park

- 1.4 The aim of this project is to improve the visual appearance of the car park whilst maintaining biodiversity value and minimising ongoing maintenance costs. The site itself offers a number of challenges including the steep slopes, the southerly aspect and its use. Anti-social behaviour, littering and trampling of the ground behind vehicles is commonplace and therefore needs to be considered when designing the planting regime.
- 1.5 It is the intention to divide the land into separate zones based on their gradients and the current landscaping. The diagram below shows how this is intended to be laid out, with retention and restoration of the existing beech hedge, reduction and maintenance of the buddleia and the creation of new aromatic and native planting areas. Within these areas it is also intended to include log piles and bug hotels for habitat creation and enhancement of biodiversity. If possible, habitat gabions will be incorporated into the design.



Image 2: Conversion of gabions to habitat

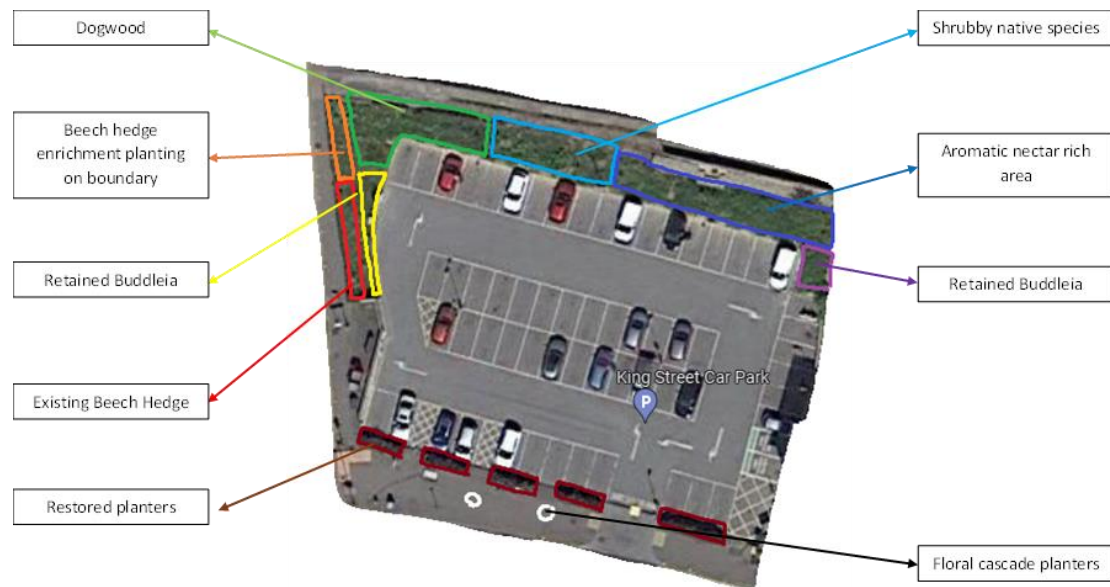


Image 3: Outline plan of the new planting zones

- 1.6 The aromatic nectar-rich area is sited on the area backed by the stone gabions. Potentially the gabions could, with additional work create good habitat too, example shown in Image 2. This will include plants such as Winter Savoury, Rosemary, Marjoram and Wood Sage



Image 4: Example of plants to be incorporated into Aromatic Nectar-rich Area

- 1.7 The native planting area will feature in middle of the land at the back of the car park and will involve new planting infilling between the existing dogwood and hawthorn. This will include Guelder rose, dogwood and spindle hedge plant.



Image 5: Example of plants to be infilled between the dogwood and hawthorn at the back of the site.

- 1.8 Further planting around the site will include crab apple trees and beech whips to reform the original boundary hedge along Church Road.
- 1.9 Along the front boundary of the car park there are six large wooden planters which house *Photinia* 'Red Robin'. These will be repaired and treated to preserve their life and the existing plants will be retained and pruned. To incorporate seasonal and colourful flowering plants into the scheme, tiered planters like those placed in Jubilee Square will be installed on the wide pavement outside the car park.



Image 6: Planters outside King Street Car Park and example of floral planters in Jubilee Square

- 1.10 It is intended that this work will be carried out during the Autumn and Winter this year.
- 1.11 The work will be funded from Parking Services existing budgets and it has been designed to minimise ongoing maintenance costs. The anticipated cost for this work is £2,000.

Previous Consultation and Policy Advisory Committee Feedback

- 2.1 This issue was considered by the Planning and Infrastructure Policy Advisory Committee on 17 October 2022 and the Committee supported the recommendations of the report.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

- 3.1 **(APPROVED)** That the proposal set out within this report is implemented. This is recommended as it will significantly improve the visual appearance of this key car park whilst ensuring that effort is paid to protecting the biodiversity of the site.
- 3.2 **(NOT APPROVED)** Alternative improvements to the car park be implemented which would further enhance the sites visual appearance or biodiversity value.
- 3.3 **(NOT APPROVED)** That no work is carried out on site and the areas highlighted are left to remain wild. This option is not recommended due to the impact this is having on the appearance of the car park and access route into the Town Centre.

Background Papers

None

I have read and approved the above decision for the reasons (including possible alternative options rejected) as set out above.

Signed: _____

LEAD MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Full details of both the report for the decision taken above and any consideration by the relevant Policy Advisory Committee can be found at the following area of the [website](#)

Call-In: Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call-in form signed by any three Members to the Proper Officer by: **5pm 31 October 2022**