

Short term options to utilise Park & Ride Sites post service closure

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee
Lead Head of Service	Jeff Kitson, Parking Services Manager
Lead Officer and Report Author	Jeff Kitson, Parking Services Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report sets out the alternative short-term uses for the Park & Ride sites following the Committee's decision on 7 December 2021 for officers to investigate alternative uses following Arriva's decision to end the bus service on 19 February 2022. In due course, a report exploring a range of medium and long-term options for the sites will come forward to the appropriate Committee.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That officers relocate the Covid-19 mobile testing unit (MTU) to the Willington Street site from February 2022.
2. That officers engage with EMS Mobile Healthcare in relation to the NHS Galleri Trials to allow use of the Willington Street site from May 2022.
3. That officers promote the Willington Street car park for event parking and apply market rate charges to event organisers.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee	7 December 2021
Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee	8 February 2022

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1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Impacts on the council's priorities of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure 	Jeff Kitson Parking Services Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	None identified in the short term.	Jeff Kitson Parking Services Manager
Risk Management	Refer to paragraph 5.1. and 5.2 of the report.	Jeff Kitson Parking Services Manager
Financial	Accepting the recommendations will generate modest income, however it remains difficult to accurately estimate levels until demand is tested.	Maxine Mahon Finance Manager
Staffing	No further implications on staffing identified.	Jeff Kitson Parking Services Manager
Legal	None identified.	Jeff Kitson Parking Services Manager
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified.	Jeff Kitson Parking Services Manager
Equalities	The recommendations may have varying impacts on different communities within Maidstone. An EqIA should be considered for service delivery changes.	Equalities and Communities Officer
Public Health	None identified.	Jeff Kitson Parking Services Manager

Crime and Disorder	There are no crime and disorder implications.	Jeff Kitson Parking Services Manager
Procurement	None identified.	Jeff Kitson Parking Services Manager
Biodiversity and Climate Change	The closure of the Park & Ride will have a significant impact on car usage and increase on carbon emissions in the town centre due to the loss of public transportation. Alternatives are being investigated to promote active travel and reduce car dependency in the town centre.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This report sets out the alternative short-term uses for the Park & Ride sites to circa 31 March 2023 following the Committees decision on 7 December 2021 for officers to investigate alternative uses following Arriva's decision to end the bus service on 19 February 2022.
- 2.2 Medium and long-term proposals are under investigation and a report exploring a range of options will come forward to the appropriate Committee in due course.
- 2.3 The London Road site is leased by Maidstone Borough Council and there are restrictions in permitted use of the land under the agreement. Therefore, the alternative short-term options in this report are focused on the Willington Street site with London Road being a consideration within medium and longer term proposals.
- 2.4 Paid parking has previously been trialled within Willington Street car park in 2018 with limited success as existing car parks for visitor parking within Mote Park are considered to be adequate to deal with day-to-day demand. Additional parking demand is only evident during large events held at Mote Park.
- 2.5 Use of the site for general parking was also considered in 2018 and public surveys conducted at the time identified that 70% of car park users would not use the facility and instead find alternative means of travel from where they started their journey. Therefore, with considerably less base level patronage in 2022 from that recorded in 2018, it is not recommended to retain general parking, as there is no evidence of a market base outside existing park visitors that will recover costs or support other sustainable transport from this location in the short term.
- 2.6 Investigation into the potential of secure commercial vehicle storage at the Willington Street site has not identified a demand. Many Kent business who

require secure vehicle storage such as recovery operators, main dealerships and enforcement companies already have suitable arrangements in place with no interest from the market identified in a short-term solution.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Due to the limited commercial demand for the sites in the short-term, consideration may be given to closing both locations from 19 February 2022 and awaiting the presentation of medium and long-term proposals to the Committee.
 - 3.2 Due to the contractual limitations of use at the London Road site it is prudent to transfer the Covid-19 mobile testing unit (MTU) to the Willington Street site from February 2022. Although this activity does not generate income for Maidstone Borough Council, the MTU does provide an important community service in the fight against Covid-19 by offering PCR testing to the public.
 - 3.3 Officers have been in discussions with EMS Mobile Healthcare in relation to the NHS Galleri Trials taking place across Kent throughout 2022. The Galleri Trials are a national project which presents an opportunity to support the local community by hosting a pioneering project to support the early diagnosis of cancer in healthy volunteers. The NHS unit is self-sufficient requiring no independent power, internet, or water. Full details can be found in Appendix 1.
 - 3.4 Mote Park has events planned between June 2022 and September 2022. As restrictions from the pandemic are lifted, these events are likely to be very popular and invariably create parking demand. The Willington Street car park is ideally located within the park to provide well-lit and secure parking to support these events. Access to Willington Street is well served by the primary road network and so directing visitors to this location will likely reduce levels of town centre congestion and provide an opportunity to generate income.
 - 3.5 Historically officers have been approached by Maidstone Studios to provide overflow parking when audience shows are taking place at the studios. With the Willington Street site free from February 2022, this provides an opportunity to engage with Maidstone Studios for event parking to reduce local congestion and parking related problems in residential areas.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended to engage with the market to apply a combination of solutions in the short term to reduce overall costs in relation to the Willington Street site.
- 4.2 Early use of the site by the MTU for Covid-19 testing from February 2022 and by the NHS Galleri Trials from May 2022 will provide an important contribution to the community.

- 4.3 From June 2022 the site can be used for Mote Road event parking as this site offers good access to the park and would assist in reducing traffic levels entering the town centre during large events.
 - 4.4 If required by Maidstone Studios for event parking, the site will provide good secure parking whilst relieving congestion in residential areas in close proximity to Maidstone Studios.
 - 4.5 It is recommended to apply market rate charges to event organisers for on-site parking and this income can be used to offset costs. However, it remains difficult to accurately estimate levels until demand is tested.
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5. RISK

- 5.1 Although there are risks associated with providing access to the sites by third parties, organisers will be required to arrange for public liability insurance.
 - 5.2 There is a risk of anti-social behavior at both sites if they remain underutilised for extended periods.
 - 5.3 The risks associated with these proposals, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.
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6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 Consultation formed part of the Alternatives to Park and Ride report to the Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee in November 2018. Elements of this consultation are referenced in section 2.5 of this report.
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Officers to engage with the Covid-19 mobile testing unit (MTU) and EMS Mobile Healthcare in relation to the NHS Galleri Trials to allow use of the Willington Street site. Officers will also engage with event organisers to promote the Willington Street car park for event parking.
 - 7.2 A future report will be presented to the appropriate Committee setting out options for medium and long term uses of the sites at both Willington Street and London Road.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 - NHS Galleri Trials.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.