

A CAR PARK NEAR RUINS?

“Won't spoil view” promise

C.T. March 13, 1964

PLANS for a 50-vehicle car park between Castle St. and the King's Arms Hotel Bowling Green are to go before Christchurch Council highways committee soon.

If the plan goes through cars will be parked almost to a point between the 14th century castle keep and the Constable's House ruins, which date from 1160.

Twentieth century mechanism will meet antiquity at a point which forms the foreground of one of England's most beautiful views — that of the Priory Church, seen from Castle Street.

Owners of the land are the King's Arms Hotel. It is understood they will be approaching the Council to lease the land from them and lay out the car park.

It is planned to landscape the car park so that it will not interfere with the view.

NIGHTMARE

There were mixed feelings about the plan yesterday. One businessman with offices near the site ridiculed the idea and said: "This view is loved by thousands of visitors and residents. The thought of 50 cars there is a nightmare to me".

But Coun. Arthur Griffiths, president of Christchurch Chamber of Trade, said: "I think there is a big shortage of car parking space at that end of the town, and I am in favour of anything that will improve the position. The loss of amenity will be almost nil if it is landscaped out properly".

Coun. Griffiths thought a car park in Castle Street would be in a much better position than the one planned for Bridge Street "It would be of much more benefit to a greater number of people".

Manager of the hotel, Mr. Tony Pinkham, explained: "The volume of our trade is such at the moment that car parking facilities are barely adequate. This is because of pirate parking—shoppers and other non-patrons who use our park as a public one.

SATISFACTORY

"If the Council were interested, the town would have satisfactory car parking facilities at each end of the High Street". He said that if the general public were able to use the planned car park, there would be room in the hotel's own park for its patrons' cars.

"I think the Council are well aware that the King's Arms gardens are as much an amenity to the town as to my residents", he added.

Mr. Pinkham said the Bowling Club pavilion would be moved to the other side of the green, and the car park, which would be made up by the Council, would have to be landscaped to a design approved by the hotel. This was to ensure that the park would not interfere with the view of the Priory, the Castle ruins on one side, and Constable's house on the other.

Chairman of the Highways Committee, Ald. W. E. Morgan, thought the idea sounded attractive. Dr. J. Cantlie, a member of the Avon Valley Branch of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, was in favour: "I think it has everything to commend it. It's a very good idea", he said.

The plan will be discussed by Christchurch Ratepayers' Association on Monday, said chairman, Mr. A. E. Toombs: "It seems that it's going to spoil the nice outlook. It would be a pity to spoil that spot".

Local historian Mr. Basil Druitt felt it might "tarnish the view of the church".

Ratepayers tell council . . .

Forget this car park plan

C.T. March 20, 1964

“DASTARDLY, outrageous, unsuitable and dangerous,” were just four of the descriptions applied to the suggestion that a 50-vehicle car park should be sited between Castle Street and the King's Arms Hotel bowling green at the meeting of Christchurch Ratepayers' Association on Monday. This suggestion was exclusively revealed by the C.T. last week.

After a long discussion in which most of the speakers voiced their opposition, the C.R.A. passed a resolution which they will send to the Borough Council asking them not to proceed with the suggested car park but to proceed with the construction of the car park by the gasometers in Bridge Street on land they already own. An amendment calling for both car parks to be constructed was defeated.

One of the advocates of both car parks was Coun. A. J. Griffiths —he thought people should face up to the fact that at that particular end of the town there was very little car parking space. Members who had read the Buchanan Report would have realised that car parking in the future would be a "big problem".

DUAL PURPOSE

If it was constructed the proposed car park would serve a dual purpose—it would benefit the King's Arms in the evenings and the people of Christchurch during the day when people wanting to shop in the town centre could park there. The parking situation in Christchurch was very grave—it was almost impossible to park in any of the existing parks on a Saturday morning.

He didn't think the view to the Priory Church would be impaired providing lorries were excluded.

Chairman of the C.R.A., ex-Coun. A. E. Toombs, described the site of the suggested car park as "a wonderful piece of land in a wonderful position right in the heart of Christchurch". The suggestion, he said, would change considerably a part of the borough of which many people had become very fond.

One member considered it a most "unsuitable" site for a car park, particularly in view of the one proposed in Bridge Street.

"Dastardly" was another member's comment, who added: "It's an outrageous thing to do to put it in place of the gardens which are so beautifully kept by the King's Arms".

DANGEROUS

The chairman wondered whether it was necessary to have two car parks so close together. And another member thought it was dangerous to have a car park so near the Town Bridge.

Another member said there was some suggestion that the proposed car park in Castle Street should be used instead of the one in Bridge Street. This, he thought, was "ridiculous". He thought the car park was intended to accommodate the people who were pushed off the road by the "No Waiting" orders in Purewell and Bridge Street and not necessarily to serve the town centre. He thought it would be a better idea to have both car parks. The resolution—"That the Council adhere to their original plan to build a car park by the gasometer and forget about the one opposite the King's Arms", was moved by Mr. J. H. Campbell and seconded by Mr. W. Scott Atkinson.

Another member felt the two car parks should be considered entirely separately and supported the amendment calling on the Council to construct both parks.

Build this car park now, say traders

C.T. April 17, 1964

IF a recommendation approved by Christchurch Chamber of Trade on Monday is successful the Borough will have a car park to accommodate 1,000 cars within easy reach of the town centre.

This car park, the traders believe, will solve parking problems in Christchurch town centre for the next seven years and will end the shopping trips by local residents to neighbouring towns where parking is at present easier. In fact, they believe, if their suggestion is approved by the borough council, Christchurch could attract customers from the surrounding areas rather than losing them.

At their meeting they "deplored the continued reduction in parking spaces for shoppers in the town", and decided to send their traffic sub - committee to meet the Borough Council to urge the immediate implementation of providing additional parking spaces on land between Pound Lane and the car park to the rear of the Town Hall.

President of the Chamber, Coun. Arthur Griffiths, explained that they had been asked by the Borough Council to reply to a questionnaire on the Buchanan Report and the first question had asked them to say what sites should be chosen for future additional car parks near the town centre.

The only car parks that, the Chamber of Trade were particularly interested in were Pound Lane. Pit Site and Sopers Lane, and to a lesser extent. Cameron Road, said Coun. Griffiths, who was giving the recommendations of the Chamber's traffic sub-committee.

INSISTED

The first three parks, he said, gave a total accommodation of 150 spaces nearer to the centre of the town. The Quay, Quay Road and others were away from the centre of the town and town centre planning consultants had insisted that car parks should be adjacent to the main street so that people would use them. In Christchurch the number of car parking spaces had decreased over the last two years because of restrictions — and this at a time of heavy traffic increase. "We think this is a suitable time for us to introduce the question of a car park on the land between the rear of the Town Hall and the by-pass; this land purchased by the Corporation under a compulsory purchase order is now lying idle. "The shops previously occupied by SCATS and Hayball & Harvey purchased at the same time, are obviously the key to any development taking place on this land. The Municipal Committee are ready to lease these two premises for five years with an option of a further two, which proves to us that no development can take place here for at least seven years. Indeed with the introduction of the Buchanan Report it is quite likely that, with the Centre Development Area map promised shortly, it might well be put off for many more years.

IMMEDIATELY

"Here is the land, bought and paid for, with good accommodation for 1,000 cars; we think this should be done immediately.

"The Christchurch traders are already losing customers to surrounding areas where car parking is easier, and if this scheme goes through we could be attracting customers from surrounding areas rather than losing them.

"The Buchanan Report is a dream of the future — this particular car park could, with very little cost, be made now. Proposals have been made by this Chamber of Trade about improving car parks in the centre of the town but until now nothing has been done; this time we do not intend to be 'put off' and we will press for immediate action on this car park."

Answering Mr. S. Maxwell, the president said it was thought that initially the cost of the car park would be "negligible". They had visualised it coming in to the Pound Lane car park — it would be more of a site clearance job.

LEVELLING

Mr. W. Bentley, a member of the traffic sub-committee, said that the site would probably need levelling. It was possible that MEXE might offer to do this — if they did it would give them a chance to experiment with some of their machinery and at the same time would provide a public service.

He agreed that the expense of the car park would be very slight. "The borough council could take it in its stride without there being the slightest risk of an increase in the rates". There was no doubt that if a car park was sited there, the borough would be rapidly repaid for any trouble and expense involved.

He reminded traders that the land had been lying dormant for two years already. "It is waste ground in the centre of a business community. It is likely to lie dormant for another five years — it is farcical." Other neighbouring towns such as Ringwood and New Milton were gaining by the fact that parking for customers was easier there.

It was up to Christchurch to encourage people to shop in the borough, but unless they could provide plenty of reasonable car parking facilities in the town centre they would not.

FULL UP

He had been shocked to see that all the present car parks in the town centre were full up in winter time—"so what it is going to be like in the summer goodness only knows," he said.

"I hope the Chamber -will persuade the Council to do something about the waste ground which is at present unused," added Mr. Bentley.

The traffic sub-committee, said Coun. Griffiths, were "very enthusiastic" about the land. "They think it could put Christchurch on the map as far as the prosperity of the centre of the town goes. We could have a great big car park for seven years right next to the High Street."

In the questionnaire the traders were also asked to say whether they thought any major new roads were necessary to deal with the anticipated traffic. Their reply -"We think obviously essential.

ONE WAY

"Should there be more one-way systems in the town to improve the flow of traffic?"--- "Recommend we ought to be able to get to the Quay without having to pass through the centre of the town".

"Which busy junctions should be re-designed?"—"Stour Road and, obviously, the by-pass junctions," said the traders.

Answering another question the traders agreed that alterations should be made in the ordinary residential roads and in the design, layout and construction of future residential roads to meet the greater flows of vehicles.

"What existing roads should be widened?"—"Difficult to say without a survey," they replied.

What did they think of charges for street parking? "Impracticable in a small town," they thought.

NO SUPPORT FOR NEW CAR PARK

C.T. June 26, 1964

CHRISTCHURCH Council will not be recommending the area planning committee to approve a plan to enlarge the car park opposite the King's Arms Hotel in Castle Street. At Tuesday's meeting only four members were in favour of the idea. Twelve voted against it. Opposition to the plan came on the grounds that it would spoil the view of the Priory Church and create a road hazard in Castle Street.

After a lengthy debate, Ald. W. E. Morgan, Highways Committee chairman, said: "I know this won't improve the view, but it won't spoil it that much". He said car parks were vital and his committee's policy was to "grab land wherever possible".

Ald. Mrs. Dorothy Baker said the car park would be a retrograde step. She deplored the steady "nibbling away" at land for car parks. "Don't let us do it", she said.

The benefits of the car park would be six to one in favour of the King's Arms Hotel, said Coun. W. A. Bridge.

Coun. Robert Affleck said he thought the car park would enhance the view of the Priory Church. Arguments on the grounds of road safety were "fatuous".

Coun. Tom Staniforth said the proposal was outrageous. Christchurch Ratepayers' Association had objected to the park, yet the Highways Committee minute recorded that the objection was "noted".

An idea that the car park could be made more attractive by making a pergola over it, came from Coun. Barrington Myers, Deputy Mayor, supporting the recommendation.

Car park would open up vista—claim

C.T. July 2, 1965

THE King's Arms Hotel's plan to build a car park in front of their bowling green would open up a panoramic vista of the Priory Church, the Castle and Constable's House from Castle Street, a local planning inquiry was told on Wednesday.

On the other hand, the plan would put cars in close proximity to the two ancient monuments, and according to town clerk, Mr. John Macfadyen, it was "axiomatic" that this would be detrimental and should be avoided.

The inquiry was into the borough council's refusal to allow the hotel to build the car park with space for 35 cars in place of the crescent-shaped one for 12 cars opposite the hotel in Castle Street.

Mr. Macfadyen said that the local emotion aroused in an appeal of this sort was not entirely misplaced. The bowling green and gardens, between the two monuments and in front of the Priory, was "a corner of Christchurch most treasured, by the inhabitants of the borough, particularly the older ones." This view, he said, was the one which remained most in the minds of holidaymakers.

BALANCING

It was a question, said the town clerk, of balancing the needs of the hotel for extra parking space with the amenities of the public.

Even with the extra parking space, it was quite clear that there wouldn't be enough room for all the cars of guests at functions at the hotel, and about 100 cars would have to be parked in the streets around.

"There is not much to be gained from this proposal. On the loss side of the balance sheet, a flower bed would be replaced by cars or the concrete of a car park." He suggested that the bowling pavilion and other obstructions to the view from Castle Street, which would be moved if the car park plan went ahead, should be cleared away in any case, thus giving the public the best of both worlds.

On balance, the amenities of the area were best preserved by the rejection of the appeal, he said.

DISADVANTAGES

Ald. Mrs. Dorothy Baker, representing the Friends of the Red House Museum, stressed there were disadvantages from the point of view of looking at the monuments to enlarging the car park. The bowling green, she said, was the ancient bailey of the castle, and to put a car park next to it was the "wrong thing to do".

For the King's Arms, Mr. Stephen Tumin later pointed out that a bailey was the court within the castle walls where the servants' quarters and transport were kept--- to put a car park there would be a "happy reversion". Another objector, Miss Margaret Cleeve, also represented the Red House Friends, who, she said, thought the presence of a car park would result in a deterioration of the setting of the monuments.

Mrs. T. H. Bunce, of 1 Castle Street, thought 35 cars there would look, "ugly". Area planning officer, Mr. K. C. Jeremiah, said permission for the car park had been refused because it would be detrimental to the visual amenities of this section of Castle Street, which contained buildings of considerable historic value.

PROBLEM

"The Priory, and the two monuments would be viewed across the tops of stationary vehicles and this would be yet another case of environment being spoilt by parked cars, a problem which besets modern cities." "From the existing car park the view to the south is across a foreground of immaculate turf, bounded by a mellow brick wall. The foliage beyond provides a transition between the brick of the wall and the stone of the Priory, the long northern elevation of which rises above the trees. Hotel manager, Mr. Tony Pinkham, told the Ministry of Housing inspector they had considered extending the car park into the Tap garden, but it wouldn't be worth taking away the attraction of the garden for the space for about eight cars.

CHAOTIC

He said that the parking situation in the King's Arms car park as well as in Castle Street and Millhams Street was "chaotic" at many times, particularly at nights during the function season in the winter the holiday season increase of patrons. The re-siting of the bowling pavilion and potting sheds necessary if the car park was built "could do nothing but enhance the lovely views of Constable's House, the Priory and the Castle ruins, opening up the entire vista from whatever direction the viewer looked". He gave an example of an average week, when the hotel had a total of 424 cars in the two car parks, averaging out at 60 a day. The main park held 51 cars, he said.

PANORAMIC VIEW

Mr. Douglas Adams, who drew up the plan for the enlarged car park, told the inspector that some space would be taken up by a substation for the SEB, but this would be hidden by a wall. The removal of the bowling pavilion to the back of the green and potting sheds and shrubbery would provide a panoramic view of the four points of interest. "The bowling green is maintained at great expense by the company, and it should not be taken for granted that the prospect is a public asset", he added. Dr. E. W. Deane, of The Chart House, Mundeford, supported the hotel's appeal. He said he drove past many limes each day. "It has long been my view that the view of the castle and Constable's House is obscured by the bowling pavilion and the things in the gardens. The obstructions would have to be removed to extend this car park, and to my mind this would enhance the view". Mr. Tumin said that the King's Arms was the rendezvous and meeting place of almost every local club, so the provision of adequate car parking was of interest to the community. He pointed out that the inhabitants of buildings in Castle Street scheduled as of historic interest had not objected to the proposal. As for the visual amenities of Castle Street, he reminded the inspector of the "singularly disagreeable" building housing Fine Fare which "glowers down the street". Aesthetically, the opening up of the vista would counteract the disadvantages of the car park's presence. The Minister's decision will be made known later.

Ministry ban on car park extension

C.T. August 6, 1965

EXTENSION of the hotel car park opposite the King's Arms Hotel in Castle Street, Christ church, will not be permitted by the Minister of Housing and Local Government, it was announced this week.

The Minister's inspector, Mr. B. J. Cornelius, heard an appeal by the hotel's owners, Charrington and Company Ltd., against the refusal of the council to permit the extension of the car park in June this year. The extension would have been over the lawn and gardens on land owned by the hotel, to the edge of the bowling green.

The Inspector's conclusions were that a car park of the size envisaged and for the full distance between, and right up to, the Constable's House (to the east), the Castle Keep (to the west) and almost to the edge of the bowling green (to the south), in the foreground of the outstandingly beautiful view of the Priory Church and in close proximity of the river would appear quite incongruous and be harmful to the overall vista.

VISTA

The Inspector accepted the statement that the re-siting of the bowls pavilion and the removal of the dense shrubbery in the foreground of the Castle Keep would open up the view but this of itself did not compensate for an intensification of parked cars on the foreground of this beautiful vista as seen from Castle Street. While recognising the hotel's need for greater parking space, and their desire to use land in their ownership, the spoliation of this attractive and well-maintained garden in this particularly historical setting was quite unacceptable.

Although the impact on traffic along Castle Street by an increase in the number of cars entering and leaving the road almost opposite the entry to the hotel car park was not a reason for refusal, the Inspector was in no doubt that the establishment of this car park would add appreciably to the already difficult conditions along this busy road. His recommendation was that the appeal should be dismissed.