



PLANNING COMMITTEE – 13TH OCTOBER 2022 ADDENDUM

ITEM 6 – APP/21/02188, CAR PARK SW OF CHERRY TREE SHOPPING CENTRE

An additional objection has been received from Ward Councillors, highlighting the development's perceived negative impact on the vitality and viability of Liscard Town Centre. The objection seeks to highlight the inaccuracy of the data provided by the applicant in their submitted Vitality Report. Concern is expressed about Smart Parking's data being limited to 2021 v 2022 and not allowing for the wider picture in relation to Covid. The accuracy of Cherry Tree management existing data capture method is brought into question, with the objection stating that flaws in the motion sensor technology over inflates footfall figures. The objection utilises GPS tracking to claim that the applicant's figures have been inflated from 17% to 72%, and that there has actually been a drop in footfall figures since Smart Parking have started its operations. The objection also highlights that whilst Birkenhead town centre, which has experienced similar hardships to Liscard, has seen a reasonable increase in visitor growth over this period, Liscard has not. The second part of the objection focuses on the negative impact of the operation of Smart Parking on a local independent business, Flower Flies, which from their financial records would appear to have experienced a decrease in their income since Smart Parking has been in operation. No information has been provided with regard to financial impact to other businesses operating within Cherry Tree Shopping Centre or Liscard Town Centre. The last part of the objection refers to complaints from customers that users with mobility issues having to seek out attendants to register their Blue Badge details and that ANPR cameras are not fit for purpose.

Smart Parking's submitted Vitality Report sought to demonstrate that the operation of their car park has not had a negative impact upon the vitality of Liscard Town Centre, whilst the additional information provided as part of this latest objection seeks to counter and dismiss Smart Parking's findings through the use of alternative data sets and evidence.

Conclusions

It is acknowledged that the NPPF advises that planning decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, and policies should promote their long-term vitality and viability. Wirral UDP Policy SH1 also states that proposals should not undermine the vitality and viability of a Key Town Centre.

In considering both submissions, it is concluded that neither is definitive in demonstrating that the operation of the car park has or hasn't unduly impacted upon the vitality of Liscard Town Centre, and that the operation of the car park by Smart Parking is the sole reason for any loss in vitality. Concern remains whether it is possible to fully discern whether the figures provided by either party can be solely attributed to Smart Parking's operation of the car park or to what extent they were still being impacted as a direct result of Covid.

As per the conclusions of the main Committee report, charging for car parking in town centres is a widely accepted practice across the UK, as are the use of ANPR cameras and associated signage to manage their operation. Having regards to this, and in the absence of any definitive evidence demonstrating that Smart Parking's operation of the car park is having a direct and negative impact on the vitality of Liscard Town Centre, the CCTV cameras and pay machines are on balance considered to be acceptable.

(NB: The following should be omitted from the main report: '*no evidence has been provided by those making representations against the development in order to substantiate their claims as to the operation of the car park and its negative impact upon the vitality of the Liscard Town Centre.*')