

Our Ref CT/R/206449

Date 30th April 2008

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Dear Keith,

**EAST WHARF, WATCHET
CAR PARKING ANALYSIS**

I write again, further to my recent correspondence and our subsequent telephone discussions, concerning the above proposals by Urban Splash.

I remain concerned that the County appear unwilling to afford appropriate weight to analyses based on data collected for the car parking study undertaken for West Somerset District Council, by consultants Oscar Faber. I appreciated at the time of undertaking those analyses that the conclusions of this study were somewhat contentious, in your view (also expressed by your colleague Graham Jones recently). It is for this reason that we approached Faber Maunsell (formerly Oscar Faber) for the traffic survey data to enable us to undertake our own further analyses, simply using the raw data collected in that study.

I understand from our recent discussions that your colleagues are unwilling to accept analyses based on the data collected for the previous study due to a lack of confidence in the data collection techniques employed. In particular, it is my understanding that your concerns and those of your colleagues are centred predominantly on the issue of the period of daily survey undertaken. Each car park was subject to a spot count on each day during the study period. Specifically, you have questioned whether that study methodology can confidently identify the peak period of demand. Clearly, an alternative methodology would have been to survey car parking occupation on an hourly basis at each car park, thus ensuring that the peak hour of each day was identified. However, the resource requirements associated with this technique would have the result of either very significantly increasing the necessary study budget, or more likely, shortening the duration over which the surveys could be carried out.

I note that the time at which each car park was visited was varied from day to day, in order to ensure that data was acquired across the day at each location, thereby informing the daily profile of parking demand as well as the weekly and monthly profiles across the study period. I summarise, in Table 1, below, the benefits and disbenefits of the two methodologies for undertaking a car parking demand study such as that produced by Oscar Faber in 2004. From this comparison, I conclude that the methodology adopted represented the most appropriate route to collecting the spread of data required to appropriately inform the seasonal demand for car parking in Watchet and is therefore an appropriate platform on which to base any analysis of car parking in support of the East Wharf proposals.

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Table 1; Comparison of parking survey methodologies

Issue	Daily observations over 3 months (as in Oscar Faber report).	Detailed hourly observations.
Identification of peak month	✓	✗
Identification of peak week	✓	✗
Identification of peak day	✓	✗
Identification of peak hour	✓ (From hourly observations over a number of different days)	✓ (From detailed hourly observations on a single day only)

The above comparison identifies the benefit of the method adopted by Oscar Faber, in that it enabled a clear identification of the peak day, week and month in the three month study period. Whilst it is likely that hourly observations would provide more detail and confidence in the results for the peak hour of the surveyed day, it would preclude confident assessment of the peak day, week and month within the study period. It would not be possible, therefore, to identify the peak day using the detailed methodology that your colleagues appear to require.

I maintain from the above comparison that the methodology adopted by Oscar Faber in their study of car parking demand is entirely appropriate for the purpose for which the data has been used in my analyses. Indeed, it has enabled an identification of demand on the peak day of the summer period, which would not have been possible using more detailed techniques over shorter time periods.

I have discussed at length the conclusions of my analyses undertaken using this data and I summarise in Table 2, below, the general conclusions of those analyses.

Table 2; Summary of car parking demand analyses based on Oscar Faber study data

Month	Number of days with...		
	...15% capacity or less in any one car park	...zero capacity or less in any one car park	...zero capacity or less across all of Watchet's car parks
May	2	0	0
June	2	1	0
July	5	2*	2*
August	10	4	0
September	1	0	0

* These 2 days were the weekend of the Watchet Carnival

The above summary demonstrates that the only time at which Watchet's car parking capacity was observed to be taken up in full was the weekend of the Carnival, which is to be expected. On all other occasions when one or more of the town's car parks were observed to be under pressure for capacity, additional spaces were available elsewhere within the town. This demonstrates that any perceived shortage of parking capacity in Watchet is in fact reflective of a management issue, whereby available parking capacity is not utilised efficiently.

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In my previous correspondence, I have identified that my Client is willing to assist with improved management of the parking available within Watchet and that, should this be required, funding could be made available from the overage payments which have been agreed with the District Council.

In addition and in order to add further detail to the car parking consideration, via my Client I have obtained further information from the District Council and consider this in light of the car parking demand identified from the Faber's surveys, below.

In my letter of 3rd April, I identified that, applying the reduced car park capacities for Harbour Road and Swain Street in order to reflect the physical alterations to the car parking arrangements which have been implemented since the Faber's study, there remained only two days when the total car parking capacity in Watchet was utilised. These corresponded with the Watchet Carnival dates. Twenty days were identified where one or more car parks exhibited less than 15% spare capacity, although an average of 27 spaces remained available at other locations at these times.

In addition to the car parks surveyed in the Faber's report, the Watchet Town Clerk has identified a further car park off West Street, containing 75 spaces of which 55 are reserved for permit holders. This adds a further 20 spaces to the public parking capacity of Watchet, 5 of which are limited to short stay use, providing a further 15 long stay parking spaces available in the town centre. Although no information is available on the usage of these spaces, clearly they add further to the capacity of Watchet, increasing the degree of flexibility within the town's parking infrastructure.

Furthermore, in my last letter I referred to Urban Splash' proposals for enhancement to the Swain Street car park, by means of removing the existing toilet block and garages. This has now been investigated in further detail, which has identified that an additional 19 general spaces, plus 3 disabled bays can be provided in this location.

Clearly, considering the above in terms of our previous findings from the Oscar Faber study data, I am confident that the proposals will not result in demonstrable harm to car parking provision in Watchet. Our conclusions from the earlier analyses identified sufficient capacity in Watchet to cater for existing demand, other than during the annual Watchet Carnival. Using their significant experience of providing similar developments in urban regeneration schemes throughout the UK, Urban Splash are confident that the levels of car parking proposed are sufficient to cater for generated demand and the proposals for enlargement of the Swain Street car park will add further capacity to the town's existing car parking stock.

It is clear that our previous conclusions; that Watchet's car parking provision is adequate and appropriate to meet levels of demand, are robust and that car parking capacity issues do not present a valid and defensible reason for objection to Urban Splash' planning application.

As I am sure you are aware this issue has a ready delayed the submission of the updated planning application by 2 months and is continuing to cause delay.

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-4-

I shall call you in the next few days to discuss details of this correspondence and your response. In the interim, should you have any questions, or wish to raise any specific issues regarding the contents of this letter, please do not hesitate to call.

Yours sincerely

CARL TONKS
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

cc Mr J Howard Urban Splash