

Little Bealings Parish Council

Admiral's Head Car Park Survey

Report for Consideration by the Council at its Meeting on 4 July 2022

Introduction

Following the granting of planning permission for change of use of the Admiral's Head public house, but not the car park, both the pub and the car park are on the market and currently said to be 'under offer'. Both remain listed as Assets of Community Value, meaning the community has a right to bid to purchase, and a six month period to prepare a bid. There is no right to buy. The Council has exercised a right to bid which runs until 14 August 2022, preventing the owners from proceeding with an alternative sale before that date.

The owners have refused to consider the Council's interest in purchasing the car park, leaving pursuing a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) as the Council's only alternative means of purchase. Pursuing CPO is extremely expensive and long winded and is not to be undertaken lightly. Therefore, while aware of the overall benefit that the car park would bring to the community, given its location close to Bealings School, the Angela Cobbold Hall and the Church – and the lack of sufficient alternative parking – it is critical to establish early on whether there is support from residents and, given the potential costs, specifically from Council Tax payers in the parish.

To this end in May 2022 a simple survey was circulated to all properties in Little Bealings, Great Bealings, Playford and Culpho, distributed with the May edition of the Fynn Lark News. This distributed 450 surveys, with additional copies available from the Angela Cobbold Hall, All Saints church, Bealings Village Hall and Bealings School. In total 600 copies were distributed locally. The survey was also available to download from the Council's website during the consultation period and reminders to complete were sent via the local enews service.

Survey Outcomes

Returns:

Little Bealings Residents: 121 20% (of total 600 distributed)

Non Little Bealings residents: 60 10% (of total 600 distributed)

The overall return was **30%**.

In May 2022 Little Bealings had 174 properties within the parish and 359 residents on the Electoral Roll. The overall rate of return per property in the parish was **70%** (ie 121 returns/174 forms).

However, there was encouragement for a property to submit more than one form if there were extra electors in the household, so the response rate considered with reference to the number of electors gives a return of **34%** (ie 121 returns / 359 electors).

Responses:

Are you in favour of the parish council pursuing compulsory purchase of the car park for the community?

Little Bealings: 30 NO 91 YES

Non Little Bealings Residents: 2 NO 58 YES

Not all respondents answering **YES** also answered these questions:

Little Bealings Residents

Option	Description	Number of Responses
1	<i>Yes I support but only if external funding can be secured for the whole purchase and refurbishment, so it is at nil expense to parishioners</i>	16
2	<i>Yes, I would like to support, but if it means the Parish Council taking out a loan for the purchase and refurbishment this will affect my Council Tax, so I want to see the financial impact before finally deciding.</i>	50
3	<i>Yes, I support however the project is funded and I hope to be able to make a donation to the costs.</i>	23

Non Little Bealings residents

Option	Description	Number of Responses
1	<i>I support but only if external funding can be secured for the whole purchase and refurbishment is at nil expense to parishioners</i>	10
2	<i>I support the Parish Council taking out a loan to purchase and refurbish the car park if external funding is not available or is insufficient to meet the whole cost and understand this will affect my Council Tax</i>	8
3	<i>I support the Parish Council taking out a loan to purchase and refurbish the car park if external funding is not available or is insufficient to meet the whole cost, and understand that this may affect my Council Tax - and I hope to be able to make a donation to the purchase price</i>	39

Analysis

While the high rate of return in the parish from the distributed surveys (70%) is a very high level of response, when this is considered against the number of electors, the rate drops to 34%.

Moreover, it can be considered that the prime need for the car park may have been indicated by those in the surrounding villages who drive to use facilities, such as the School, in the parish. However, the survey only elicited a 10% return from outside the parish, indicating that this is not an issue that engages residents from the neighbouring parishes – although 97% of the returns did support the purchase.

In addition, the responses that were received from the Little Bealings electorate did not all give support for the purchase, and some 13% of the returns only gave support if the project was at nil cost. It is highly unlikely that the purchase could be pursued at nil cost, but this response shows that, even if the electorate was offered the car park “for free”, it is not shouting loudly for it. In fact the highest number of positive responses came from those who acknowledged that some financial impact was likely but, in principle, felt that the purchase should be pursued further (ie 41% of the returns).

Overall the survey has shown that of an electorate of 359 only 19% of Little Bealings positively support the purchase. This is too low for the Council to consider that it has a mandate from its electorate to pursue a purchase of the car park.

Data Note

Now that the data has been collated, the emails received by the Council submitting survey returns will be deleted, in line with the Council’s Privacy Statement regarding the retention of personal data. The majority of survey forms do not contain personal data, but those that do will also be destroyed. Others will be retained for a period of six months only.

Recommendation

At its meeting on 4 July the Council is recommended to decide:

- Whether it wishes to pursue a purchase of the Admiral’s Head Car Park
- If it does not, whether it wishes to retract its right to bid to enable a sale to proceed before 14 August 2022