

Falmouth Civic Society

A Future for Falmouth's Car Parking
Suggested strategic approach

March 2012

Car Parking in Falmouth

We are aware that Cornwall Council is considering a car parking strategy for Falmouth. We would like to be involved in this.

However, from parts of the text in the Core Strategy report, we have real concerns about some of the directions indicated, especially those that seem to resurrect schemes that have failed to win support and have been rejected in the past.

We have a clear vision and proposals as to how car parking in Falmouth could be handled, and how the number of spaces could be increased with minimal environmental impact or disruption to the historic areas of Falmouth. Also, that suggest how an integrated plan can be achieved (see fig. 1 below).

The Quarry and former TA site

We suggest that the majority of car parking spaces should be concentrated at the Quarry car park and the former TA site (car park), and that these should be linked by an improved shuttle bus service. These two car parks should be developed as multi-storey car parks, surrounded by single aspect buildings (see figs 2 & 3 below). These buildings could be student accommodation and or affordable starter homes in the Quarry. On the TA site the buildings could be a mix of retail, live/work, workshops to provide starter opportunities for specialised and interesting retail outlets, and the setting for a unique draw to the experience of the Town centre (much as recommended by the Portas Review). This suggestion builds on a consultant's report (Terrence O'Rourke) on the TA site. The Quarry car park in this way should accommodate about 500-550 spaces, and the TA site about 250-300. It would more than compensate from any loss of parking due to the closure of the Church Street car park and pedestrianisation, and would fulfil the objectives for mixed uses and retail. Indeed it could increase the parking by around 100 spaces.

The Grove Place car park could be improved, and some extension to the retail spaces included. We suggest that some development could take place between the Tesco store and the public toilets. Also, that the landscaping is extended to join the Killigrew Monument to the entrance to Event Square, to provide an open space that is not compromised by a road crossing it. The development and additional landscaping would reduce the car spaces here to around 100.

The existing roads should also be considered. We suggest that Arwenack Street, from the roundabout with Avenue Road, up to and including Custom House and Custom House Quay be treated as 'shared space', following the principles and design quality established in, for example, Exhibition Road in London.

Church Street car park

The key to making this work well is the integration with transport. We would close the Church Street car park, with the exception of properly designed spaces restricted for use by residents of adjacent properties (losing up to around 150 spaces there). The regeneration of this car park should have three elements to it. It should be designed, first as public open space, second as a place where coffees, drinks and snacks can be

enjoyed, and third as a modest transport hub, all of which should relate to its prominent location when approached / viewed from the water. It is not suitable for major development, as we understand that the land there is contaminated, so should not be interfered with too much. We suggest that the shuttle buses could track through to the rear of the site to allow a change-over, and time to stop and for people to hop on and off the buses with shopping in a more relaxed manner. We also suggest that the Park and Float service stops there as well. This potentially could be a huge draw to the centre of the town, and a place where people could relax – and gather strength for further shopping! It would also be alive with people coming and going from boat and bus. Indeed, we see no reason why this should not attract more people to the centre of town than may have previously come with the car park in operation – the environment would be so much better.

Well Lane

We do not think that the Well Lane car park should be developed. Firstly, if the Quarry and TA car parks are imaginatively developed as we suggest, there is no need for extra numbers of spaces there. Secondly, the regeneration of Church Street would be a draw, and thirdly the transport options would ensure it was easy for the majority of people to get to the centre of the town. But above all, we consider Well Lane unsuitable for an increase in the number of cars there as the access to it is poor and through a very sensitive and valuable environment. Wood Lane is tree lined, has trees with preservation orders, is in a conservation area, has historically significant buildings, walls and 18th and early 19th century gate posts lining the route. The road is narrow in places, and the turning into Swanpool street is sharp and with restricted visibility. This part of the route is historically important and the line of the road can be traced from maps as early as the 1690s. In other words, the access cannot reasonably take much additional traffic, and secondly, its historic and landscape and townscape value renders it unsuitable for road widening or other schemes by Highways. Thus we suggest that Well Lane is kept as it is, as a short term car park, with some spaces dedicated for those with mobility difficulties. It should be free of charge in the mornings up to 09.30 for people wishing to drop into the centre for ATM machines etc, and in the evenings after 18.00 to serve places like the Church Hall and Poly.

The Dell

For the Dell car park, we think there are small improvements that could be made. It is important as a car park for the train station, and also as a hub for the shuttle bus and taxis. We think it should be retained as a car park and that the only development there should be to provide a decent shelter for the bus stop, and also a taxi rank and taxi call point. As such, it provides another opportunity to park close to the eastern part of the town in the summer season. It is certainly not suitable for other forms of development as it subject to flooding (unsurprising as it was formerly the fish ponds for Grove Hill House).

Parking spaces

Our suggestions could result in an increase of over 100 car parking spaces, located in a way that has least disruption to Falmouth's environment. Also, combined with the

shuttle bus service, that would maintain and in place improve the footfall in the town centre. The table below indicates the estimated current main parking provision, and the changes we think could be achieved.

	Current provision	Civic Society proposed
The Dell	105	90
Grove Place	168	100
Former TA site	150	275
Well Lane	37	35
Church Street*	168	0
The Quarry	281	525
Totals	909	1025

* Church Street should still include an adequate number of parking places for local residents (perhaps 30-40)

Overall strategy

The figure below shows our proposal. To achieve successfully will necessitate the good design.

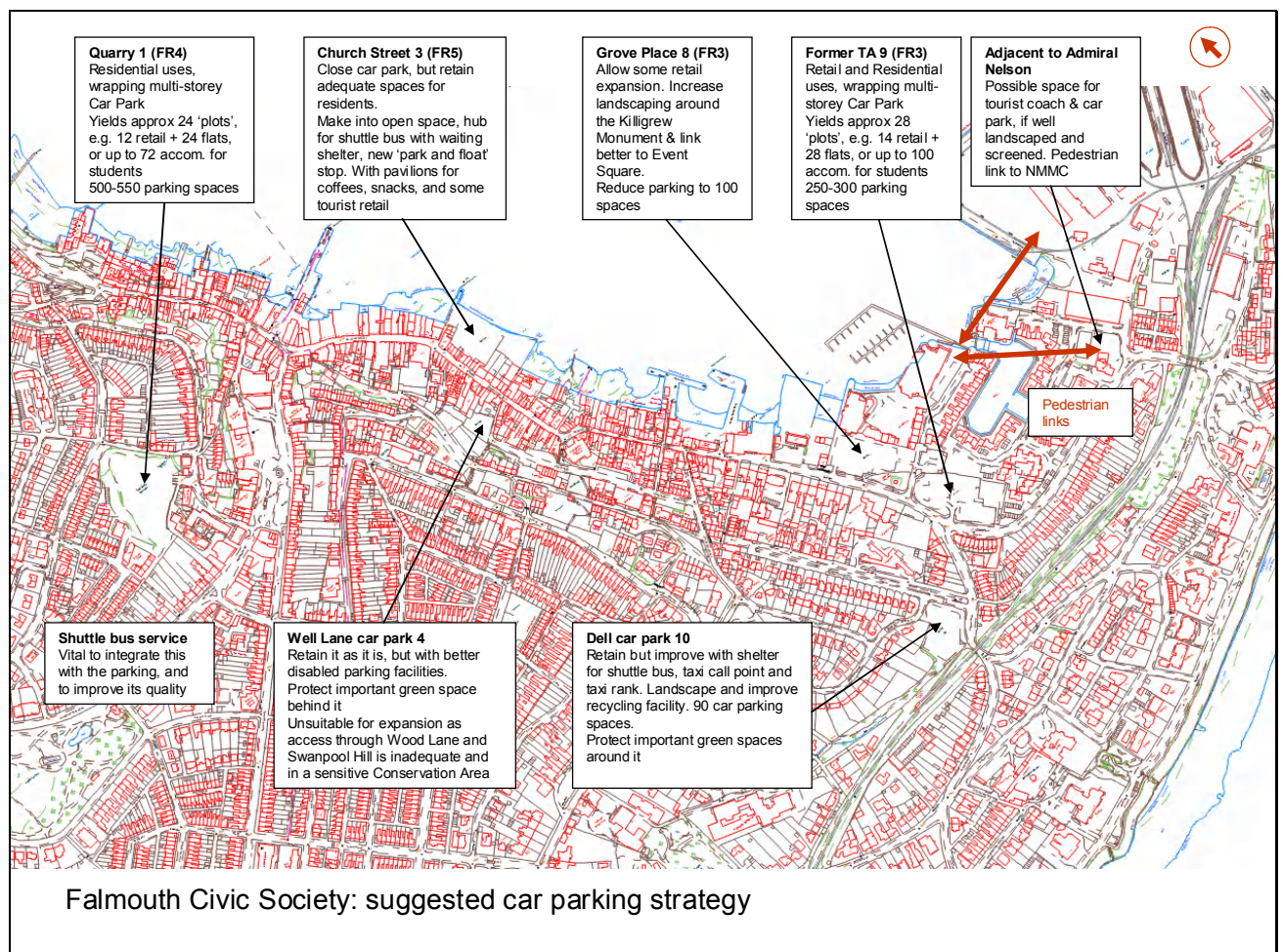


Fig 1.

Wrapping buildings around car parks

The use of single aspect buildings, wrapping around car parks has been used in other parts of the UK. It has the potential advantage of keeping the streets active (e.g. 'Active units must wrap parking in the ground floor of a building' Southampton City Council). Such buildings can be multifunctional or residential, as in the case of St Paul's Square in Birmingham, where a multi-storey car park's impact has been hidden behind single aspect flats.

Also, the urban structure of a town can be maintained and in many places improved. This would certainly be the case of the TA site, and would improve the aspect of the Quarry. Figure 2 shows how King's Lynn plan to disguise a car park and 'mend' the urban fabric at the same time.

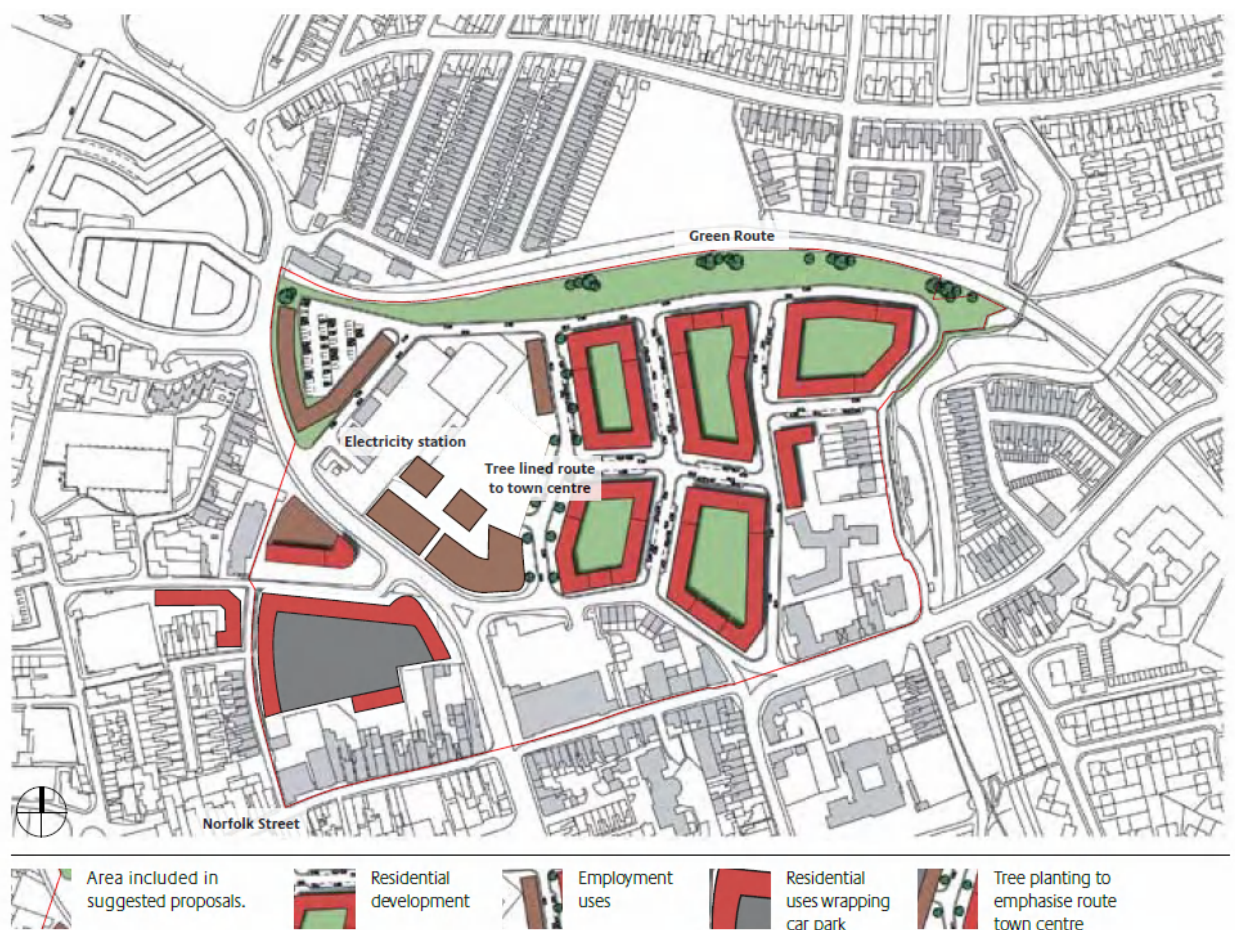


Fig. 2 King's Lynn

A scheme in Canterbury (some years old now) shows how it is possible to disguise a car park in a way that also keeps the character of the surrounding urban area (Fig.3). With good design in Falmouth, this form of development opens up possibilities for affordable and/or student housing, for retail use, while at the same time incorporating car parking and minimising its impact.



Fig 3. Rosemary Lane car park, Canturbury