

CABINET

21 FEBRUARY 2025

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH, REGENERATION AND TOURISM

A.4 ORWELL PLACE CAR PARK AND EVENT SPACE, DOVERCOURT: POST PROJECT REVIEW

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To present a post project review of Orwell Place Car Park and Event Space for consideration by Cabinet, and to provide an update on the regenerated site in Dovercourt Town Centre since opening in September 2023.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dovercourt suffered from a generic decline in the popularity of English seaside towns and therefore in 2018 the Council commissioned a regeneration plan for the town called 'Dovercourt Revisited' to set out a vision seeking to secure Dovercourt as: a thriving town with an attractive High Street, a range of shops and cafes and regular street markets: a town which is proud of its heritage but also able to respond to new opportunities. A town with a high-quality public realm and open spaces, stunning beaches and good connections – an attractive place to live, work, shop and visit.

Orwell Place Car Park is the first phase of the Dovercourt Revisited plan, supporting the town to grow to its full potential and will support future projects in the process of being developed which include.

1. **Kingsway improvements:** A major investment into the appearance of Dovercourt Town Centre.
2. **Library project:** The Adult Community Learning skills centre will return to the area within a refurbished library.
3. **Milton Road:** Demolish the out-of-date multi-storey car park at Milton Road and provide an attractive and safe ground level car park to compliment Orwell Place.
4. **Victoria Street:** Demolish a dangerous structure and redevelop 8 new social homes.

Further opportunities are currently being delivered through the High Street Accelerator Pilot Scheme (HSA) which has provided seed funding of £237,000 and green space funding of £500,000. Dovercourt High Street was chosen as one of ten high streets receiving funding from the HSA Pilot Programme which was announced in March 2023 as part of the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Action Plan.

Schemes within the HSA include shop front grants, a pop-up shop, improved wayfinding, shop wrapping, a new website and events. The green spaces proposal currently being designed by a team of award-winning urban designers, will link the high street, beach and the Kingsway Improvements Projects enhancing the public realm offer to the community.

The 'Starlings' site redevelopment was advocated in Dovercourt Revisited, approved by Cabinet in July 2019. Dovercourt Revisited proposed a redevelopment of the with new

animated public space, public toilets, and a surface car park with the capacity to accommodate 59 car parking spaces, with six of designated for disabled use.

On the 13 September 2019, Cabinet allocated £1.599m from existing Council resources to the redevelopment of the Starlings site in Dovercourt Town Centre and the demolition of the Milton Road Car Park and 15 parking spaces in Bagshaw Road. The delivery proposed redevelopment of the Starlings site first, to create new parking and then demolish Milton Road Car Park.

Following provisional completion of the project, Orwell Place Car Park was opened in September 2023 on the site of the former derelict Starlings Site in Dovercourt High Street with a revised 53 parking spaces in total; eight with electric vehicle charging, and eight disabled bays which host two of the electric chargers. Essex County Highways are still to sign off the entranceway and so completion of the final account with contractors remains outstanding, which will determine the final cost of the project. The Council has allocated a total of **£2,541,050** to the project and there is currently a forecast underspend.

The project was completed during the post-pandemic surge in the cost of capital works, and significant ground contamination was discovered, as well as the following challenges:

- post COVID-19 and the substantial increase in the cost and availability of materials.
- more site contamination than originally anticipated.
- discovering a petrol tank that had leaked and further contaminated the development site.
- discovering pits and wells on the development site.

As a result of these challenges, the project budget was increased by Cabinet on 28 January 2022 to £1,871,550 when the tenders were received, and subsequently on 7 October 2022 to £2,471,550 and in January 2023 this budget was increased to £2,541,050 as set out above.

In recognition of cost increases, the demolition of Milton Road Carpark was removed from the project by Cabinet in January 2022 and subsequently included in the successful Capital Regeneration Project bid (formally the Levelling Up Fund) in July 2022. These works have recently been approved for planning permission and are scheduled to take place in 2025.

The approved contractor is now in the final snagging period, and there is a requirement for UK Power Network (UKPN) works to be completed and final Highways approval for the entrance before the final account can be agreed. The total forecast cost of the project is expected to be £2,377,123.67 when the retention sum is paid, which would leave a potential underspend of £163,926.

Progress against the original project objectives as set out in the original report has been strong, as set out in the table below:

Objective	Current Position	Achieved/Not Achieved
Bringing back into productive use a vacant and derelict site, which currently blights the town and has a negative impact on Dovercourt High Street.	The space is an attractive car park with public toilets and doubles as an events space.	Achieved
Creating new public realm	Public realm including seating lines the	Achieved

and amenity space, providing the opportunity for greater animation thereby creating a more vibrant town centre	pavement in the High Street with a pocket seating area opposite the Milton Road Car park. The landscaping has now established and provides an attractive, vibrant space that supports improving dwell time and a sense of pride in the area	
Providing a multi-use 'event space' in the town centre, through the creative use of the proposed new surface car park	The car park has seen 14 events in 2023/4 in line with the Councils Temporary Events Notices	Achieved
Reducing the opportunities for crime and disorder through improved urban design	Recent data from the Police for Harwich shows that Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) incidents have fallen from 341 in 2021 to 165 in 2023. This is part of a wider trend of reduced incidents of ASB	Achieved
Providing a high quality meeting place in the town centre improving the opportunities for positive social engagement	There is a pocket space within the car park along with benches to the front providing sociable dwell space	Achieved

The original Cabinet report, also set out wider objectives for the car park and events space, to bring in additional footfall and private sector investment to the town centre as a whole. These have yet to be achieved, as this project is one of several 'building blocks' including the wider regeneration of Dovercourt through the CRP and HSA schemes. The significant national decline for town centres, driven by the move to out of town and on-line shopping, should also be recognised in progressing the wider outcomes set out below:

- Supporting wider 'place shaping' objectives through the delivery of new housing
- Creating confidence in the market, and encouraging private sector investment
- Creating a more accessible public car park, and improving footfall in the town – where footfall in the town has dropped slightly since 2023
- Giving the towns' existing traders the confidence to invest in their businesses and in their property

The full list of key objectives from the delivery of Orwell Place are summarised in Appendix A along with lesson learnt.

It is important to learn from any challenges for future projects and ensure that mitigation is put in place to ensure similar issues can be addressed pro-actively. The Council now has a Project Delivery Unit staffed with architects and surveyors to provide expertise and capacity for the scale of capital works it is undertaking given the tens of millions of grants from Government for capital delivery.

Some of the key lessons learnt, which importantly should be used to inform future projects are:

Objectives	Lessons Learnt	What was the Response?
<p>Bringing back into productive use a vacant and derelict site, which currently blights the town and has a negative impact on Dovercourt High Street</p>	<p>Large construction projects need several services working together as there are so many areas of risk and so a pool of experts to support projects is important.</p> <p>Cost should be revisited after lengthy periods between tender and construction periods, taking into account any external impacts to expenditure.</p> <p>Increasing qualified capacity within the organisation across disciplines, is required for capital delivery such as surveying, to support the completion of substantial capital projects and resourcing client-side financial oversight in addition to the cost consultants in the external professional team.</p>	<p>A project board has been established for large capital projects which consists of relevant senior officers and partners as appropriate.</p> <p>Addressing the limited capacity within the organisation to support substantial capital projects. Steps have already been taken to address this issue by establishing a new Project Delivery Unit for two years by Cabinet in July 2024. The Unit's primary goal is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of project delivery, ensuring that projects are completed on time and within budget.</p>
<p>Improving footfall in the town</p>	<p>Providing a new and improved car park will not necessarily stimulate usage with a slight drop in income compared to Milton Road the previous year. With residents permits starting at 11am roadside parking spaces are still premium. Businesses and residents who use the town earlier will take any free space available rather than using the car park</p>	<p>This car park will future proof the parking offer for residents if restrictions regarding on-street parking is ever brought in across the district.</p> <p>Consideration needs to be taken as to how this objective links with further regeneration in the area. This is the first stage of a number of regeneration projects that will support the improvement to footfall.</p>
<p>Creating a more accessible public car park</p>	<p>Ensuring all decisions are in place prior to opening, such as designation of the site as a car park. The car park opened prior to the designation of the land was granted. This meant the car park was free of charge for a period.</p> <p>Greater consideration should be given as to how the car park will operate. For example, the impact on the operational model</p>	<p>Long term planning is required and consultation with the community, businesses, stakeholders and internal services to understand future aspirations, opportunities and challenges.</p> <p>EV chargers are expensive to install. Outsourcing means that the installation maintenance and usage remains the responsibility of a third party who in turn provide a small % of the income to TDC</p>

	<p>of the EV chargers and on any funding opportunities if the space is multi-functioning.</p> <p>It is more cost-effective to outsource the provision of EV charging than provide it in house due to the risks of innovative infrastructure.</p>	
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IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT CABINET:

- a) notes this post project review of Orwell Place and endorses learning points as set out in Appendix A, to inform future capital projects;**
- b) subject to (a) requests the Leader to ensure that key messages from Appendix A, are clearly documented within the Council’s Annual Governance Statement, as expected by the Best Value duty Statutory Guidance; and**
- c) invites the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to consider including the outcome of this review on their work programmes to provide additional scrutiny of the performance and lessons learnt.**

REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)

The recommendation is made to update Cabinet with regards to the success of the Orwell Place capital project which has supported economic development, enhanced community services, and ultimately contribute to the long-term regeneration of Dovercourt High Street.

To inform Cabinet of the lessons learnt for the delivery of a major construction project and to ensure these are documented and considered for future projects.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

To not complete a Post Project Review. However, it is important that lesson are learnt and shared so that the Council can enhance its ability to deliver projects in the future. This methodology provides the opportunity to put processes in place to further reduce the risks with regards to the issues noted in this report.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

Corporate Plan (2024-2028)

Orwell Place Car Park is a development which respond directly to the corporate priorities identified within the Council’s 2024-2028 Corporate Plan and accords with the Community Leadership and Tendring4Growth themes, which are central to that Plan. The development responds to a number of priorities in the Corporate Plan as set out below:

- Pride in our area and services to residents
- Championing our local environment.
- Promoting our heritage offer, attracting visitors and encouraging them to stay longer

- Financial sustainability and openness
- Tendring Economic Strategy (2020 – 2024)

The Tendring Economic Strategy was updated in 2020. The Strategy uses evidence from Office of National Statistics to demonstrate that there have been some important changes in the district’s economy in recent years which require a change in approach.

The Strategy recommends:

- The Council should identify property assets within public ownership which can be transformed to offer low-cost or free space to support new businesses and positive social activities to maximise their social value. Map spaces owned by Tendring DC, looking at where there is a stronger case (lower opportunity cost) of making them available for free or low-cost use by residents with ideas. Provide meanwhile space in perpetuity, with advice and guidance to support ‘graduates’ into more permanent spaces;
- Balancing the evolution of Harwich as a port with the ongoing evolution of the visitor economy in the town and surrounding area.
- Valuing places within Tendring. Ensuring that they can evolve as modern and effective economic locations where people want to live and work.

OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT (including with the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other stakeholders where the item concerns proposals relating to the Budget and Policy Framework)

Consultation and Public Engagement

In refreshing the Dovercourt Town Centre the Council’s professional team (Urban Initiatives Studio) undertook two consultation events. These sought to secure the views, thoughts, aspirations and comments of:

- The Council’s Cabinet
- Ward Councillors
- The Harwich and Dovercourt Coastal Communities Team
- The Harwich and Dovercourt Tourism Group
- Essex County Council (Localities and Highways Teams)
- The Council’s Corporate Team; and
- Relevant Heads of Service.
- Published public notices.
- Harwich Town Council

In production of this report, consultation with the Council’s Operations and Delivery team was undertaken in regards to usage and lessons learnt.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (including legislation & constitutional powers)

Is the recommendation a Key Decision (see the criteria stated here)	YES	If Yes, indicate which by which criteria it is a Key Decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Significant effect on two or more wards <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Involves £100,000 expenditure/income <input type="checkbox"/> Is otherwise significant for the service budget
		And when was the proposed decision	2 July 2024

		published in the Notice of forthcoming decisions for the Council (must be 28 days at the latest prior to the meeting date)	
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The Starlings site was acquired under Section 227 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) for the purpose of the development, re-development or improvement likely to contribute to the achievement of any one or more of the following objects:

- (a) the promotion or improvement of the economic well-being of their area;
- (b) the promotion or improvement of the social well-being of their area;
- (c) the promotion or improvement of the environmental well-being of their area.

The Council is under a legal obligation to consider options on how the site can be used to demonstrate these objects and consideration of them has been set out in the body of the report.

In addition, following acquisition of the Starlings site, this land is held within the General Fund. In coming to decisions in relation to management of General Fund assets, the Council must act in accordance with its statutory duties and responsibilities. Under case law following Section 120 of Local Government Act 1972, the Council is obliged to ensure that the management of its assets are for the benefit of the district.

Councils are empowered to promote and build greater economic growth through regeneration projects using subsidiary powers under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 and General Power of Competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

The Council entered into a Standard Services Contract for the Redevelopment of the Starlings Site and Demolition of Milton Road on 4th November 2020. The contract between Richard Jacksons Ltd and Gipping Construction Ltd was a JCT Intermediate Building Contractor's Design 2016 and was signed on the 24th April 2022.

The Richard Jackson Ltd contract was managed within the Council under TDC's terms and conditions and the Gipping contract was managed by Richard Jackson Ltd under the JCT terms and conditions.

The Best Value Duty relates to the statutory requirement for local authorities and other public bodies defined as best value authorities in [Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999](#) ("the 1999 Act") to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness". In practice, this covers issues such as how authorities exercise their functions to deliver a balanced budget ([Part 1 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992](#)), provide statutory services, including adult social care and children's services, and secure value for money in all spending decisions.

Best value authorities must demonstrate good governance, including a positive organisational culture, across all their functions and effective risk management.

A part of the Councils project management processes as recognised within the Capital and Treasury Strategy, there is the expectation that Departments will report the outcome from investment decision, such as the delivery of this project.

The Monitoring Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:

The report has focused on the delivery and objectives of the project however, little information has been provided on the governance arrangements which were required to be in place for the site to be used for its intended use.

To be used as a car park (and be designated as such under the Council's powers) an Off-Street Parking Places Order was required under Section 35(1) and (3) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. A licence agreement was required for the owners and suppliers of the electric charging points in the car park. External funding which was sought for the electrical charging installations could not be used as the grant conditions required the space to be used as a car park 24/7 and as a consequence of the intentions to be used as a temporary event space, it was not possible to comply with the conditions.

The report makes reference to the TENS process for licensing purposes; however no data has been provided to confirm if these have been applied for. If third parties have been using the site as an events space, information on the arrangements with them should be included.

The lessons learnt within Appendix A should capture previous feedback that attention needs to be factored into future project management of capital projects on how the site will be used, what decisions, permissions, consents and licences are required to ensure the outcomes can be delivered in accordance with the Council's governance framework.

Within the statutory guidance on complying with the Best Value Duty, "every best value authority must make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The reference to "making arrangements" makes it clear that the Best Value Duty is concerned more with intentions, namely securing improvement in the way in which an authority performs its functions, than outcome. This means that while authorities are not expected to be perfect, they should prioritise learning and development throughout the organisation and always strive to learn from past mistakes, address under-performance, and avoid continuing in a direction where failure is evident. Errors and poor performance should be clearly isolated and exceptional rather than repeated or systemic, and should not be significant in value, governance, or have wider implications. Lessons learned and the steps taken to address mistakes and poor performance should be clearly documented in the authority's Annual Governance Statement."

Cabinet should consider whether any key messages within the lessons learnt, as set out in Appendix A, should be captured within the Council's Annual Governance Statement for 24/25.

FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

On the 13 September 2019 Cabinet approved a budget of £1,595m from unallocated funding from available Council's budget with an additional £4,170 bringing the total to £1,599,170.

The unallocated funding originated from:

£1.0m assigned to Harwich Regeneration;

£250k assigned to the refurbishment of the Milton Road Car Park; and

£345k assigned to Business Investment and Growth.

On the 28 January 2022 a report was presented to Cabinet informing them that tenders for the construction came back with significant inflationary costs in materials and labour in the

construction industry post Covid-19. Following evaluation and assessment the lowest and recommended tender was valued at £1,971,000, an additional £376,383 above the budget of £1,599,170.

The report recommended that the demolition of the Milton Road Car Park is postponed and that at least £74,000 of the sum to demolish Milton Road Car Park is reassigned to the Starlings Project, to enable the scheme to proceed. Also, that £272,383 from the Business Investment Fund was transferred to the project.

On the 7 October 2022 Cabinet approved the Financial Performance Report – General Update 2022/23 and 2023/24. Within that report there was a recommendation to approve funding allocations met from the Corporate Investment “Reserve. Within that allocation was £600,000 to support the development due to higher level of land contamination than originally expected.

In January 2023 an Executive Decision was published to allocated £48,000 of capital funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and in that year £21,500 S106 money allocated for Dovercourt High Street was added to the budget.

The total budget for the project was £2,541,050

Spend to date - **£2,366,992.67** (excluding retention)

Under spend **£174,057**

£10,131 has been retained until full completion and sign off.

This will leave a potential underspend of £163,926

The Contractor is now in the final snagging period, there is still a requirement for UKPN works to be completed and Highways sign off for the entrance before the final account can be completed.

The car park follows the same structure as all TDC car parks which allows free parking for residents after 11am. All other users are required to pay in accordance with TDC’s parking policy.

Once the project has been finally concluded and all outstanding sums paid, any resulting underspend will be considered as part of future financial performance reports as necessary.

<input type="checkbox"/>	The Section 151 Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:
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It is acknowledged that the information set out within this report is helpful to support the Council in reflecting on its investment decision and in strengthening its processes going forward where necessary.

However, it will be important to draw the outcomes set out within this report together with the outcome of similar reviews, which is recognised within the recommendations above in terms of reference to the Annual Governance review and associated Statement. As part of this annual review process, it may be helpful to consider the further development of a template for reporting the outcome of the Council’s investment decisions to ensure consistency and coverage of the relevant issues.

USE OF RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The following are submitted in respect of the indicated use of resources and value for money indicators:

A) Financial sustainability: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;	The car park follows the same structure as all TDC car parks which allows free parking for residents after 11am. All other users are required to pay in accordance with TDC's parking policy
B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks	Please see relevant comments within this report.
C) Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.	Providing a safe, well managed car park in the centre of the town improves the usage of the high street and supports it greater regeneration. It also brings back to use a number of derelict sites raising the reputation of the Council

MILESTONES AND DELIVERY

Milestones

All milestones and deliverables have been met for this development, but the site will continue to be monitored to ensure that the high standards currently in place are maintained.

Key dates;

- Cabinet approved the project– 13 September 2019
- Grant of Planning Permission – 29th September 2021
- Issued to tender – 1st November 2021
- Return tenders – 29th November 2021
- Letter of intent signed – 21st February 2022
- Commencement on site – 30th March 2022
- Completion – 15th June 2023 (excluding entrance crossover)

The original timeline for the project as reported to Cabinet in September 2019, is set out below:

2019

2020

2021

Activity	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1
Cabinet Approval	*						
Land Negotiation							
Land Purchase							
Project Team App							
Site Investigation							
Site Survey							
Envir Imp Assess							
Starlings Design							
Starlings Constr							
Milton Rd Demolit							

Actual timeline

Activity	2019/20		2020/21				2021/22				2022/23				2023/24				2024/25		
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	
Cabinet Approval	■																				
Land Purchase			■																		
Project Team Appointed					■	■															
Site Investigations					■	■															
Site Surveys					■	■															
Design					■	■	■														
Planning Consent								■													
Tenders									■												
Construction											■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

The detail of the reasons for the change in the timeline are included in the background section

ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION

- **That the car park is not used** – as with most town centre, there is very little parking around the vicinity especially on market day. Therefore, this is a low level risk. Unfortunately, there is no data in regard to full usage due to the residents permits providing free parking. Only data from paying vehicles is available which shows that between March and September 2023, Milton Road had an income of £15,428 plus £1,250 PCN income compared to March and September 2024 when Orwell Place had an income of £15,265 plus £252 PCN income. Therefore, there has been a slight drop in income.
- **That there is anti-social behaviour** within the car park and public realm. CCTV is in place therefore it is low risk.
- **That the final account is overspent** - there is still enough budget in the capital account to cover the retained figure. It is highly unlikely that there will be further invoices from the contractors and therefore low risk
- **That the wider objectives are not met for private sector investment in the town centre** - this project will be supporting the wider regeneration of the town so cannot be considered as a standalone but as a contributor. To date no private sector investment

has been observed as a result of the car park.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

This development seeks to provide facilities which are accessible and sympathetic to the needs of the community and promote pride in the town. This will increase opportunities for local entrepreneurship and grow and retain economic activity and job creation in the local area. We do not expect this development to have a negative impact on groups with protected characteristics.

This car park was also designed to support equality by providing gender neutral public toilets, a number of disabled parking bays some of which has EV chargers to ensure their availability.

SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS

Evidence suggests that there is a direct link between economic prosperity and social inequality. The Orwell Place project seeks to improve the economic performance and vitality of the town by creating a more appealing environment through targeted interventions focussed on vacant and rundown sites, and by securing improvements in the quality of the public realm. The acquisition and redevelopment of Orwell Place was identified as being an important component of securing the successful renaissance of Dovercourt Town Centre.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2050

Orwell Place responds to the requirements of the Building Regulations current at the time. The design limits its impact on the climate via the use of green technologies by the inclusion of four double Electric Vehicle charging points with the ability to add a further as demand increases.

The scheme improves the public realm and includes an events area. Improved public realm of the area and road safety will also improve the environmental conditions.

OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS OR IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

Crime and Disorder

The new car park has been awarded the Park Mark safer parking award. The Safer Parking Scheme is an initiative of the Association of Chief Police Officers aimed at reducing crime and the fear of crime in parking facilities.

Safer parking status, Park Mark®, is awarded to parking facilities that have met the requirements of a risk assessment conducted by the Police. These requirements mean the parking operator has put in place measures that help to deter criminal activity and anti-social behaviour, thereby doing everything they can to prevent crime and reduce the fear of crime in their parking facility.

The Orwell Project also seeks to improve the vitality of the town by creating a more appealing environment replacing vacant and rundown sites, and by securing improvements in the quality of the public realm. It is envisaged that this will encourage more footfall into town which is a proven deterrent to crime.

Health Inequalities

Improved public realm and a safe space which opens up the high street, will have a positive impact on the quality of life currently

	<p>experienced by residents.</p> <p>The car park has also provided a number of disability parking areas some of which have accessible EV chargers.</p>
Subsidy Control (the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and the related Statutory Guidance)	Orwell Place is open to all so they do not have a subsidy requirement. The construction contract was run through an open tender process.
Area or Ward affected	Dovercourt High Street, Harwich and Kingsway Ward

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

Dovercourt has suffered from the generic decline in the popularity of English seaside towns and as a consequence of this and other local factors (such as the transformation of working practices at Harwich International Port), and the decline of other industry, the town's economy has contracted. The condition of the built environment and the quality of the public realm has seen a commensurate decline. Dovercourt High Street sees a number of derelict residential and commercial premises that are located in close proximity to the town centre.

By the beginning of 2018 the Council agreed to prepare a regeneration plan to support the town centre, and project proposals identified that together would help regeneration Dovercourt.

Urban Initiatives Studio Limited were commissioned by the Council in early 2018 to prepare Dovercourt Revisited for the town centre, and their draft proposals were considered and approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 19th July 2019.

Dovercourt Revisited has a vision which seeks to secure Dovercourt as: a thriving town with an attractive High Street, a range of shops and cafes and regular street markets: a town which is proud of its heritage but also able to respond to new opportunities. A town with a high quality public realm and open spaces, stunning beaches and good connections – an attractive place to live, work, shop and visit.

Dovercourt Revisited identifies nine principal objectives which together establish a Town Centre Strategy for the renaissance of Dovercourt. The Strategy seeks to:

- Reinforce the town centre as a place for local facilities and services;
- Intensify the town's role as a place to live and work;
- Enhance the town's character and strengthen its distinctiveness;
- Enhance the town's accessibility by all modes of transport;
- Provide high quality public realm;
- Offer quality public spaces that invite people to stay;
- Support small interventions that animate the town centre and deliver quick improvements to catalyse change;
- Effectively promote and market the town; and
- Proactively manage the town centre to ensure that it is fresh, safe, well maintained and welcoming.

Dovercourt Revisited details a wide range of site development and public realm interventions, which are presented in the document as the 'Dovercourt Twenty'.

The acquisition and redevelopment of the Starlings site and the demolition and redevelopment of the Milton Road Car Park (this is now part of the Capital Regeneration Projects) feature as priority projects within the Dovercourt Twenty. These projects seek to secure positive social, economic and environmental outcomes for Dovercourt by:

- a) Bringing back into productive use a vacant and derelict site, which currently blights the town and has a negative impact on Dovercourt High Street
- b) Supporting wider 'place shaping' objectives through the delivery of new housing;
- c) Creating a more accessible public car park, and improving footfall in the town;
- d) Creating new public realm and amenity space, providing the opportunity for greater animation thereby creating a more vibrant town centre;
- e) Providing the potential for a multi-use 'event space' in the town centre, through the creative use of the proposed new surface car park;
- f) Reducing the opportunities for crime and disorder through improved urban design;
- g) Creating confidence in the market, and encouraging private sector investment;
- h) Giving the towns existing traders the confidence to invest in their businesses and in their property; and
- i) Providing a high quality meeting place in the town centre improving the opportunities for positive social engagement.

At its meeting in July 2019 Cabinet approved Dovercourt Revisited, which articulates a vision for the regeneration and transformation of the town. Dovercourt Revisited promotes a targeted range of public realm improvements to support the regeneration required.

Dovercourt Revisited seeks to improve the economic performance and vitality of the town by creating a more appealing environment through targeted interventions focussed on vacant, derelict and rundown sites, and by securing improvements in the quality of the public realm.

Cabinet also approved the preparation of a detailed business case for the redevelopment of the Starlings site which is located on Dovercourt High Street and has been derelict for some years. Despite being hoarded the site was a blight on the town centre. The Milton Road Car Park is a two storey steel and concrete structure located adjacent to the Starlings site. The Car Park (which incorporates public toilets), is in the Council's ownership.

Dovercourt Revisited advocated that the Starlings site be redeveloped to provide new animated public space, public toilets, and a surface car park with the capacity to accommodate 59 car parking spaces (six of which being designated for disabled use).

That business case came to Cabinet in September 2019 and Cabinet approved the acquisition and redevelopment of the Starlings site.

Since Sept 2019, Phase 1 of the Starlings redevelopment was completed with the initial feasibility, survey and site investigation. A Portfolio Holder decision dated April 2020 provided authorisation to proceed with the land acquisition and detailed design and the land for the Starlings site was acquired in August 2020 at a cost of £528,000.

The main scheme was developed with detailed design by Richard Jackson Ltd in 2020/21 with a budget of £1,599m. Competitive tenders were sought for the scheme in Autumn in 2021, and received. The project consultant's Richard Jackson Ltd reviewed the tenders and a

made a recommendation that Gippings should secure the construction contract.

In January 2022 Cabinet received a report entitled Starlings Site and Milton Road, Harwich Redevelopment which requested additional funding to the project due to significant inflation in construction costs post-Covid, seen on the return of tenders to complete the works. Cabinet approved a transfer of funds into the project of £272,383 from the Business Investment Fund and agreed to postpone the demolition of Milton Road Car Park. On the same report, Cabinet agreed that the demolition of the Milton Road Car Park is postponed and that at least £74,000 of the sum to demolish Milton Road Car Park is reassigned to the Starlings Project.

At that meeting Cabinet agreed that the project had significant benefits. It would create a more accessible public car park and provide the potential for a multi-use 'event space' in the town centre. It was felt that this would improve footfall in the town and reduce opportunities for crime and disorder. This investment should create confidence in the market to encourage private sector investment within the town centre and give the town's existing traders the confidence to invest in their businesses and in their property. It would bring new amenity into the town centre with new toilets, and a high quality design scheme for the public realm.

Review of delivery of the project

Carpark

Delivery and residents' views

The Orwell Place car park was opened in September 2023 and delivered on all elements proposed except six parking space due to the increase in size of the spaces in line will. The scheme delivered 53 spacious parking bays, eight electric vehicle charging point, two of which are situated on disabled bays with four disabled bays in total.

Public realm

The space has been well received by residents of and visitors to Dovercourt. At a recent consultation to support the Capital Regeneration Projects (CRP) those in attendance voiced support for Orwell Place and especially commented on the success of the planting and seating. Providing a new modern and safe area for parking providing users access to shops and businesses in the High Street and to parks and beaches.

Usage

However, the car park has not stimulated use which is demonstrated by the amount of income generated compared to Milton Road. For the same period of March to September, in 2023 Milton Road had an income of £15,428 and £1,250 from PCN, in 2024 Orwell Place had an income of £15,265 and £252 from PCNs. Observation also shows that the car park is used below capacity. There is no reduction to the amount of cars parking on the streets, especially during market day.

During the Capital Regeneration Project consultations residents and businesses stated that due to the free residents permits not starting until 11am those who need to park earlier are still taking up any free space available on the street. The High Street Accelerator Partnership have commissioned a parking survey for the area which is expected to be presented at the next partnership meeting.

However, the Partner Partnership are looking at options in regard to initiatives reducing on-street free parking in town centres so this car park will future proof our residents. This is a

practice being implemented around town centre throughout the country.

Electric Vehicle Charging

With regards to EV chargers, TDC instructed a national supplier to take the responsibility for running the service to give a sustainable solution to the parking service. This ensured that the service was future proofed as the private company is responsible for maintaining the equipment and managing the risks around pricing and electricity costs.

Safety

The new car park has been awarded the Park Mark safer parking award. The Safer Parking Scheme is an initiative of the [Association of Chief Police Officers](#) aimed at reducing crime and the fear of crime in parking facilities. Safer parking status, Park Mark®, is awarded to parking facilities that have met the requirements of a risk assessment conducted by the Police. These requirements mean the parking operator has put in place measures that help to deter criminal activity and anti-social behaviour, thereby doing everything they can to prevent crime and reduce the fear of crime in their parking facility.

Bay size

Car parking space size in Orwell Place has been increased following new guidance from the Institution of Structural Engineers. According to the new guidance, car parking spaces should be increased by five percent in length and eight percent in width. Larger spaces enhance the overall parking experience for many car owners by addressing existing difficulties with restricted space to exit vehicles. The space modifications alleviate this difficulty. Increasing the size of car parking spaces may benefit a range of people, such as owners of SUV type vehicles, people with disabilities or parents of young children.

As an event space

The area is also used as a popular event space where a number of different activities have already been held. Events such as the High Street Accelerator launch saw 3000+ residents and visitors attend, Harwich Festival teamed up with the Dovercourt Market Traders through the summer to put on artisan markets which also provided live entertainment and the Harwich Town Council use the area for their Christmas light switch on and carols.

The use of the space for events follows the Councils 'Temporary Events Notice' and all applications are submitted in accordance with current procedures via Harwich Town Council. Licensing have provided the following information in regard to event notices which has been taken from TDC's application form guidance:

Temporary Event Notice

Temporary Event Notices (TENs) may be given in respect of licensable activities at unlicensed premises, or at premises which already have a premises licence or club premises certificate to cover licensable activities not permitted by the existing authorisation and/or remove existing premises licence conditions.

A temporary event notice may only be given by an individual and not by an organisation, club or business. The individual giving the notice is the 'premises user'. 'Premises' means any place and can include, for example, a recreation ground or park. For outdoor events in particular, a clear description of the area where licensable activities will be carried on should be provided. The premises user is required to give details of the nature of the event, for example a wedding with a pay bar and disco, or the sale of alcohol at a farmers' market. Details of the times during which the premises user intends to carry out licensable activities must also be provided.

There are prescribed limits on TENs including the number of TENs per premises per calendar year (15), the maximum total duration of the periods authorised by TENs in relation to individual premises (21 days per calendar year), the maximum length of time a TEN may have effect (168 hours or 7 days) and the maximum number of people attending at any one time (499 persons which includes staff, organisers, stewards and performers). There has to be a gap of at least 24 hours in between TENs at the same premises.

Construction

Current position

The car park was opened in September 2023. Further works were required to the bell mouth and pavements which were completed in September 2024 and the Contractor is now in the final snagging period. There is still a requirement for UKPN works to be completed and Highways sign off for the entrance before the final account can be completed.

However, early indications with regards to the budget are that:

£174,051 currently remains in the budget.

£ 10,131 has been retained until full completion and sign off.

Unless any further works are required to the entrance once Highways have visited site, this could leave an approximate underspend of £160,000.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS

[Executive Decision for allocation from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#)

[Starlings and Milton Road Development January 2022](#)

[Starlings Car Park Construction Contract – March 2022](#)

[Appointment of Professional Team – Starlings and Milton Road – March 2021](#)

[Appointment of Contractor to Provide CDM Services – March 2021](#)

[Appointment of Contractor to Undertake an Asbestos Survey and sampling - Starlings site, Dovercourt](#)

[Terms for Partial Acquisition of Land Known as the Starlings Site – April 2020](#)

[Licence Agreement – Orwell Place Car Park, Dovercourt. July 2024](#)

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL

[STARLINGS SITE AND MILTON ROAD, DOVERCOURT REDEVELOPMENTS](#) January 2022

[Planning Application – December 2021](#)

[Report of the Cabinet - A.1 - Executive's Proposals - General Fund Budget and Council Tax 2023/2024](#)

[Report of the Cabinet - A.1 - Executive's Proposals - General Fund Budget and Council Tax 2022/2023](#)

[Financial Performance Report – General Update 2022/23 and 2023/24](#)

[Leader of the Council's Items - A.1 - Highlight Priority Actions 2022/23 towards Corporate Plan Themes - Monitoring Report at the Half Year Point](#)

[Report of the Corporate Finance and Governance Portfolio Holder. - A.1 - Updated Financial Forecast/Budget 2021/22](#)

[Report of the Cabinet - A.1 - Executive's Proposals - General Fund Budget and Council Tax 2020/2021](#)

[Annual State of the Tendring District Statement by the Leader of the Council](#)

Starlings and Milton Road Development – September 2019

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Objectives, Issues and Lessons Learnt

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A.4 APPENDIX A - Objectives, Issues and Lessons Learnt

OBJECTIVES	OUTCOME	ISSUES	LESSONS LEARNT	HOW WE RESPONDED
<p>Bringing back into productive use a vacant and derelict site, which currently blights the town and has a negative impact on Dovercourt High Street</p>	<p>Achieved. The derelict site has been brought back into use with a car park, public toilets and events space.</p> <p>This also provide an open space within the Town Centre which is convenient for the shops, Cliff Park and the beach.</p>	<p>Contamination – a huge amount more than anticipated was discovered as well as wells and two petrol tanks (on a garage site) which had leaked and contaminated the site further.</p> <p>The balancing tank was installed taking into consideration the initial proposal put forward to Anglian Water. However, this proved to be insufficient in size and had to be increased in size.</p> <p>Complexity with different wall types especially with the poor condition of the wall on the neighbouring property and the irrigation system overlaying the balancing tank and fitting in the retaining wall.</p> <p>The bell mouth has taken a year to finalise and for the work to be completed to ECC Highways specification which still requires signing off. The original design allowed a left hand turn onto Orwell Road, which is a one way street to the right of the exit. However, this was ‘value engineered’ out of the scheme early in the construction due to cost. Due to an oversight by the programme management team, the new design was not submitted until the end of construction and required approval from Highways and a</p>	<p>Large construction projects need several services working together as there are so many areas of risk and so a pool of experts is really supportive.</p> <p>The progress was delayed by factors that were discovered during construction some of which may have been foreseeable by more rigorous initial investigations. Due to this, further investigations were required.</p> <p>Being totally clear what we aim to achieve. Lost cost and time on extra investigations (noted above), detail design, programming and getting the planning conditions in place during construction.</p> <p>Cost should be revisited after lengthy periods between tender and construction taking into account any external impacts to costings.</p> <p>Much greater contingency is required to ensure the budget is more achievable and realistic to cover escalating costs or unforeseen expenses.</p> <p>Increasing qualified capacity within the organisation across disciplines required for capital delivery such as surveying to support the completion of substantial capital projects and resourcing client-side financial oversight in addition to the cost consultants in the external professional</p>	<p>A project boards has been established for large capital projects which consists of relevant senior officers and partners as appropriate.</p> <p>Limited capacity within the organisation to support substantial capital projects. Steps have already been taken to address this issue by establishing a new Project Delivery Unit for two years by Cabinet in July 2024. The Unit's primary goal is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of project delivery, ensuring that projects are completed on time and within budget.</p> <p>A regular process of risk management and programme progress reporting to that board rather than ad-hoc responding when problems arise. Best practice on milestone reporting established.</p> <p>Strong contract management is required for external project delivery teams. Council still requires significant capacity within the organisation to manage the project.</p>

		road closure.	team.	
<p>Creating new public realm and amenity space, providing the opportunity for greater animation thereby creating a more vibrant town centre;</p>	<p>Achieved. Public realm including seating lines the pavement in the High Street with a pocket seating area opposite the Milton Road Car park. The landscaping has now established and provides an attractive, vibrant space that supports improving dwell time and a sense of pride in the area.</p> <p>At a recent consultation for the Capital Regeneration Projects in the town centre, those in attendance voiced support for the car park and commented on the success of the planting and seating areas.</p>			<p>The public realm has been the most talked about and support aspect of the car park and supports the necessity to provide space that residents can be proud of.</p>
<p>Providing the potential for a multi-use 'event space' in the town centre, through the creative use of the proposed new surface car park</p>	<p>Achieved. The car park is used as an Events Space fourteen times per year.</p> <p>To enable events to be held the site was made level. Electric points have been added to the lamp posts with one being a higher voltage to support, for example, refrigeration units.</p> <p>There has also been a plug installed in the centre of the car</p>	<p>Uncertainties over requirements which led to redesign at the early stages to reduce the gradient on the site to better serve as an events area.</p> <p>Electric supplies. Only one company bid to make the connection, but the cost was significant</p> <p>The demand for an events space is stronger than for the car park. Every allocation for events has been used and a full programme for the current year is in discussion.</p>	<p>Strong stakeholder and community engagement is essential throughout every stage of the project. A regular programme of updates needs to be established rather than ad-hoc when problems arise.</p> <p>Listening to potential users for events enables the opportunity to provide essential power outlets, lighting etc. at the point of construction to provide a fully flexible space that meets demand.</p>	<p>Best practice on milestone reporting put in place from the start.</p> <p>The demand for the events space will be considered in the future planning of Milton Road.</p>

	park to accommodate the Harwich Town Council's Christmas tree and provides added flexibility to the sites uses.	Plugs etc. had to be added at later stages after suggestions from the local community.		
Providing a high quality meeting place in the town centre and improving the opportunities for positive social engagement, helping to build civic pride and community cohesion.	<p>Achieved. Dovercourt and Harwich have some amazing creatives who regularly stage events around the area. Since the car park has opened the full fourteen available dates have been used to bring these opportunities into the high street.</p> <p>The carpark also provides a pocket space for up to 12 people to comfortable socialise.</p>	Since opening there have been numerous problems with the locks to the public toilet.	Ensure the budget also covers high end fixtures and fittings once construction is complete. Limited budget was spent on the Public Toilet budget resulting in sub-standard fixtures.	High streets that are thriving have taken the bold move to repurpose and are become more of a social space with cafes, bars, artisan shops and space for people to dwell. Providing this space supports that narrative and provides a area where the community can engage in an attractive, safe area. This will be further enhanced with future works on Milton Road.
Reducing the opportunities for crime and disorder through improved urban design	<p>Achieved. Recent data from the Police for Harwich (not Ramsey, Parkstone or little Oakley) shows that Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) incidents have fallen from 341 in 2021 to 165 in 2023. This is part of a wider trend of reducing incidents of ASB.</p> <p>The car park has also opened the space up leaving less space for ASB.</p>	A new pilot system for Data and CCTV was suggested and installed which once commissioned was overly expensive and complex for the requirements. This was decommissioned due to the ongoing cost.	<p>Ongoing costs of equipment installed needs to be considered to ensure sustainability. There is a risk with the newest technology if all the ongoing costs and/or issues are unknown.</p> <p>Any equipment installed needs to have the approval of the end project owner.</p>	<p>The new car park has been awarded the Park Mark safer parking award. The Safer Parking Scheme is an initiative of the Association of Chief Police Officers aimed at reducing crime and the fear of crime in parking facilities. Safer parking status, Park Mark®, is awarded to parking facilities that have met the requirements of a risk assessment conducted by the Police.</p> <p>Strong engagement with the end owner to ensure that the project is suitable and sustainable.</p>
Improving footfall in the town	Not achieved. On the 17 th January 2025 footfall data for	This is the first project implemented from Dovercourt Revisited	Providing a new and improved car park will not necessarily stimulate the usage with a slight	This car park will future proof our residents if restrictions regarding on-street

	<p>the area was gathered using Place Informatics. 2024 compared to 2023 has shown a decrease of 1.19%.</p>	<p>and the footfall data demonstrates the need to continue to implement improvements such as those funded through the Capital Regeneration Projects and High Street Accelerator funding.</p>	<p>drop in income compared to Milton Road the previous year. With residents permits starting at 11am roadside parking spaces are still premium. Businesses and residents who use the town earlier will take any free space available rather than using the car park</p>	<p>parking is brought in across the district.</p> <p>Consideration needs to be taken as to how this objective links with further regeneration in the area. This is the first stage of a number of regeneration projects that will support the improvement to footfall.</p>
<p>Empowering the town's existing traders with confidence to invest in their businesses and in their property</p>	<p>Not achieved. There is no data to support this project objective in regards to the car park. However, there are currently UK Shared Prosperity and High Street Accelerator grants available to businesses which have been well received by those in Dovercourt.</p>		<p>Large projects shouldn't be looked at in isolation to determine their success. As with this car park it is the first steps to regeneration and supports projects withing the CRP and HSA.</p>	
<p>Creating confidence in the development market, and encouraging private sector investment</p>	<p>Not achieved. There is no data or anecdotal evidence available with regards to investment in the area. However, despite public perception often believing the contrary, the high street has less than average vacancy rates. There is significant development on the outside of town which currently provide greater opportunities for growth.</p>	<p>Orwell Place is the first of several projects in the town centre and will support the impact of the regeneration when the wider schemes are completed.</p>	<p>Large projects shouldn't be looked at in isolation to determine their success. As with this car park it is the first steps to regeneration and supports projects withing the CRP and HSA.</p>	
<p>Creating a more accessible</p>	<p>Achieved. The new car park has 53 good sized</p>	<p>Delays to the construction due to Programme Managers</p>	<p>Robust contract management is required and the resource</p>	<p>Long term planning is required and consultation with</p>

<p>public car park</p>	<p>spaces, of which 8 are disabled bays, with step free access to the town centre.</p> <p>The increased size of bays supports residents with improved access to their vehicles but in particular those with limited mobility and young children.</p> <p>At a recent consultation for the Capital Regeneration Projects town centre residents and businesses praised the car park as a welcomed improvement to the area but raised concerns that parking is only free to residents after 11am which is too late for many especially on market day. On-road spaces around the town continue to be full.</p>	<p>not getting the planning conditions released for Highways and not passing on revisions to the design.</p> <p>Funding for EV Chargers was applied for at the beginning of the project. However, due to the site being an events space as well the chargers wouldn't be accessible 24/7. This went against the funding T&C and therefore it couldn't be claimed increasing the cost pressure.</p> <p>The car park has not stimulated use which is demonstrated by the amount of income generated compared to Milton Road. Observation also shows that the car park is used below capacity. There is no reduction to the amount of cars parking on the streets, especially during market day.</p>	<p>identified at the start of the project.</p> <p>Ensuring all decisions are in place prior to opening such as designation of the site as a car park. The car park opened prior to the designation of the land was granted. This meant the car park was free of charge for a period.</p> <p>Greater consideration should be taken as to how the car park will operate. For example, the impact on the operational model of the EV chargers and on any funding opportunities.</p> <p>It is more cost-effective to outsource the provision of EV charging than provide it in house due to the risks of innovative infrastructure.</p>	<p>services to understand future aspirations, opportunities and challenges. The Parking Partnership are looking at ways to potentially restrict or charge for on-street parking in line with town centres across the country. This car park will future proof free parking for residents and supports wider regeneration activity in the town.</p> <p>The High Street Accelerator Partnership have commissioned a parking survey for the area which will support future parking aspirations.</p> <p>EV chargers are expensive to install. Outsourcing means that the installation maintenance and usage remains the responsibility of a third party who in turn provide a small % of the income to TDC</p>
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