

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 3 January 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

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## Mill Street Reserved Permits

### Report summary:

A review of the reserved parking arrangements at Mill Street Car Park, Sidmouth.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

### Recommendation:

- (1) That Cabinet approve the redesign of Mill Street Car Park, including the creation of a dedicated "Reserved" Parking area, where permit holders are able to use any available bay, as opposed to having their own dedicated space.
- (2) Cabinet set a fee of £2000 for a space within the reserved section of the car park
- (3) Cabinet support a concessionary discount of 25% of the permit price for Council Tax paying residents. This then broadly equates to the yearly amount achieved from a pay & display space within nearby Roxburgh Car Park
- (4) Cabinet agree to offer first refusal for a reserved space to all existing lease holders
- (5) That Cabinet commit to offering priority to Council Tax paying residents for future permit sales.

### Reason for recommendation:

Mill Street – This car park serves an important dual purpose, to help meet short term parking need, and also through the provision of reserved bays which are used by residents/holiday homeowners for a guaranteed long term parking space. The planned separation of the two parking areas should negate the need for the installation and maintenance of costly bollards, as well as providing much more accessible short-term parking for visitors to the town. A limited resident's concessionary offer has the opportunity to make reserved parking more affordable for those who do not generate an income from their home, and the financial implications of such an offer are included within the report. The use of this car park has changed several times over recent years, and has evolved from being a wholly reserved car park to the shared space that it is now. Recognising and acknowledging the historical arrangements, local importance and the unique nature of the car park are important when planning how the car park is used in the future.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Communications and Democracy

- Economy
- Finance and Assets
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

**Equalities impact** Low Impact

**Climate change** Medium Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk

**Links to background information**

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

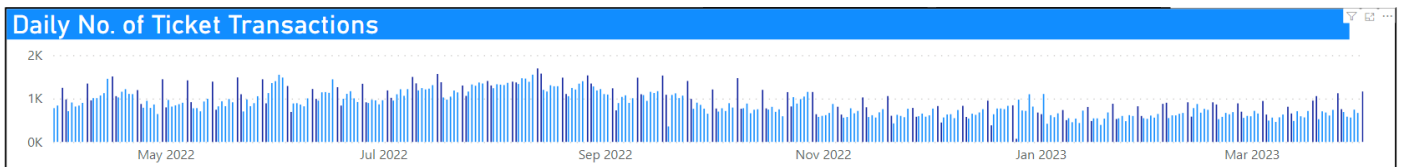
- Better homes and communities for all
- A greener East Devon
- A resilient economy

## Report in full

### 1. Mill Street, Sidmouth - Background

Mill Street Car Park, Sidmouth, consists of 46 spaces, 19 of these are available for pay and display parking on a short stay basis (maximum 3 hours between 8am – 6pm) with the remaining 27 leased on an individual basis to local residents, 2<sup>nd</sup> home and business owners on an per-space basis. The lease on each of the bays expires on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 and the car park is due for much needed resurfacing which provides the opportunity to review the current permit offer, as well as the layout of the car park to ensure that it best meets its intended and desired purpose.

Parking in Sidmouth is in high demand throughout the year, particularly during the busy summer months. The below graphic shows the daily number of parking transactions in the town throughout the year 2022/23. June, July and August offer the peak visitor times, with a generally consistent level of visitors through the low season.



As a pay & display car park, despite only offering 19 spaces, Mill Street generated revenue of £14,194 in 2022/23, amounting to approximately £747 per space, and 13.5 transactions per day. The nature of the current lease arrangements allowed the renter to choose their desired parking bay, assumingly leaving only the least desirable spaces available for pay & display parking. This also makes it difficult to establish if there are available spaces without entering the car park.

The cost of each leased bay for the current period was £1,500 +VAT (£1,800) on an annual basis, which initially included the installation of a retractable bollard, ensuring that only the key holder was able to access the space. This also allowed for the parking space to be secured when not in use.

There are currently 6 people on the waiting list for a bay, should one become available. At the request of the portfolio holder at the time, no new leases have been granted for Mill Street since June 2022, awaiting this review of the parking arrangements.

Unfortunately, the type of bollard installed in the car park have proved to be particularly unreliable, with EDDC expenditure on repairs and maintenance exceeding £2,600 since January 2022. This is in excess of the initial outlay of approximately £500 per bollard, per bay. The main failings have been with the locking and rising/sinking functions. At the time of writing this report, there are still currently 3 bollards which are inoperable awaiting repair. The unreliability of the bollards have led to many complaints from those affected, with it being unclear through the lease process who should be responsible for the ongoing cost of repair and maintenance.

## **2. Current Lease Holders**

Many of the current lease holders in Mill Street are 2<sup>nd</sup> home/business owners, who pay for a dedicated space to aid the commercial operation of their business. Generally speaking, and especially in busy coastal towns where parking is at a premium, holiday/short term let properties with the offer of a dedicated parking space are more desirable than those without. Many of the terraced properties within close proximity to Mill Street do not have a dedicated on or off-street space, hence the demand for reserved parking.

The provision of privately let holiday accommodation is an important part of Sidmouth's tourism industry, and intrinsically linked is EDDC's offer of reserved parking spaces.

For those who live in the centre of town all year round, finding parking is equally challenging, and there is an unmet demand for reserved parking to meet residential need.

The current make up of permit holders is as below;

Sidmouth addresses – 9 leaseholders

Other East Devon Address – 2 leaseholders

Address outside of the District – 16 leaseholders

The waiting list for spaces is currently made up of all Sidmouth based residents (6).

Based on the above figures there is a current known demand for 33 spaces of the 46 available, assuming that all current leaseholders wish to renew.

Throughout the term of the current scheme, 3 leaseholders have surrendered their leases, for varying reasons.

The current scheme did not apply a restriction on residency, or any other condition and spaces were offered on a first come, first served basis, honouring previous arrangements in the car park.

## **3. Consultation with existing leaseholders**

As part of an informal consultation exercise with existing leaseholders, a set of questions were sent out, with the responses summarised as below. 12 responses were received in total, although a holiday let management company responded on behalf of its 15 customers with reserved parking spaces in the car park, amounting to some duplication with the direct responses;

The email text can be found as Appendix 1.

1 - Are you a Sidmouth resident without a dedicated parking space at your home address?

Yes – 5

No – 5

Did not specifically answer – 2

2 - Do you use your space for any activity associated with operating a business i.e. guest parking for B&B/Holiday home?

Yes – 11

No – 1

3 - Would you be interested in purchasing a permit for the reserved area of the car park from April 2024 if this is determined as the preferred way forward?

Yes – 12

4 - Do you feel that parking spaces in the reserved area of this car park should be prioritised for those that can demonstrate a residential need?

No – 11

Yes – 1

5 - Any further comments regarding parking in Sidmouth as a whole would also be appreciated for context.

Response 1

*Parking in Sidmouth has always been an issue. I am acutely aware of this as I have lived in Sidmouth for most of my adult life. There are obviously a number of residents in the town who rely on their cars and they need priority so they can use them. And should have priority so they can go about their daily business. However, there are those who need to drive into town from further out to do their shopping. It is always going to be difficult with so little space. This is not counting the visitors on whom the town relies and who need to be able to park to enjoy the town and spend money to keep the Sidmouth economy going. I don't know what the answer to this one is. Maybe make more use of the park and walk at the Knowle? Maybe a park and ride from further out? Or a bit radical but how about putting another story on the ham carpark and making that double height? Or double height at Manor Road*

Response 2

*Sidmouth is a very nice town that works well for a demographic of user: families with small children, mature families and recreational walkers*

Response 3

*Parking for visitors in Sidmouth "as a whole" is insufficient as it is such a popular and wonderful holiday resort. Any provision of extra visitor parking in Sidmouth must be done with great care, to avoid spoiling/ruining the unique character of the town.*

Response 4

*In the summer months drivers can be quite competitive when looking for a parking space and try to park in a reserved space if you lower the bollard to park. The signage and policing of the reserved area would have to be of the top order. I have never had any problem with my bollard, other than routine maintenance to remove dirt and gravel around the cover flap in order to ensure it operates easily.*

*My only other comment is that although I'm aware that in other towns the issue of holiday homes can be contentious, I think that taking into account the reduced number of hotel beds available in the town and the income visitors provide to the local business, who are struggling as it is. The holiday homes in East town contribute to the prosperity of the high street and help to maintain Sidmouth's reputation as a holiday destination.*

Although not specifically asked as a question, there were several direct responses relating to the proposal to have a designated permit holders only section of the car park, as well comments relating to the importance of the bollards/other method of securing a space.

In summary, the respondents overwhelmingly felt that it was of the utmost importance that permit holders/leaseholders continued to have a way of securing their bay to stop unauthorised parking, and so to be able to guarantee a parking space for visiting guests. This was also the stand out point of discussion in subsequent phone conversations with 2 x current leaseholders

#### 4. Proposed way forward

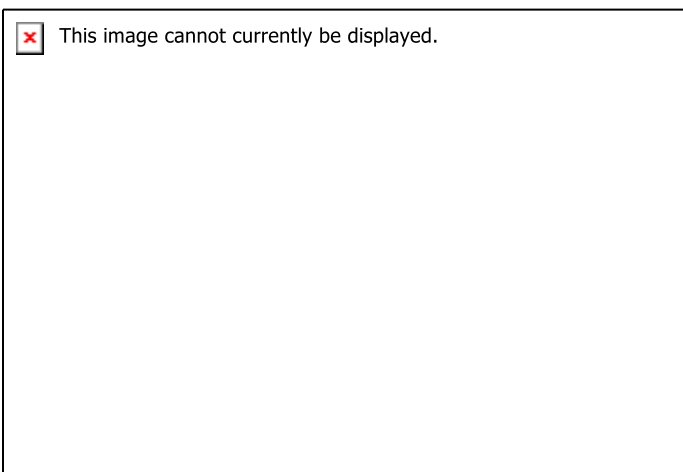
The impending resurfacing work, brings the opportunity to redesign the Mill Street car park, and consider a new way of managing reserved parking.

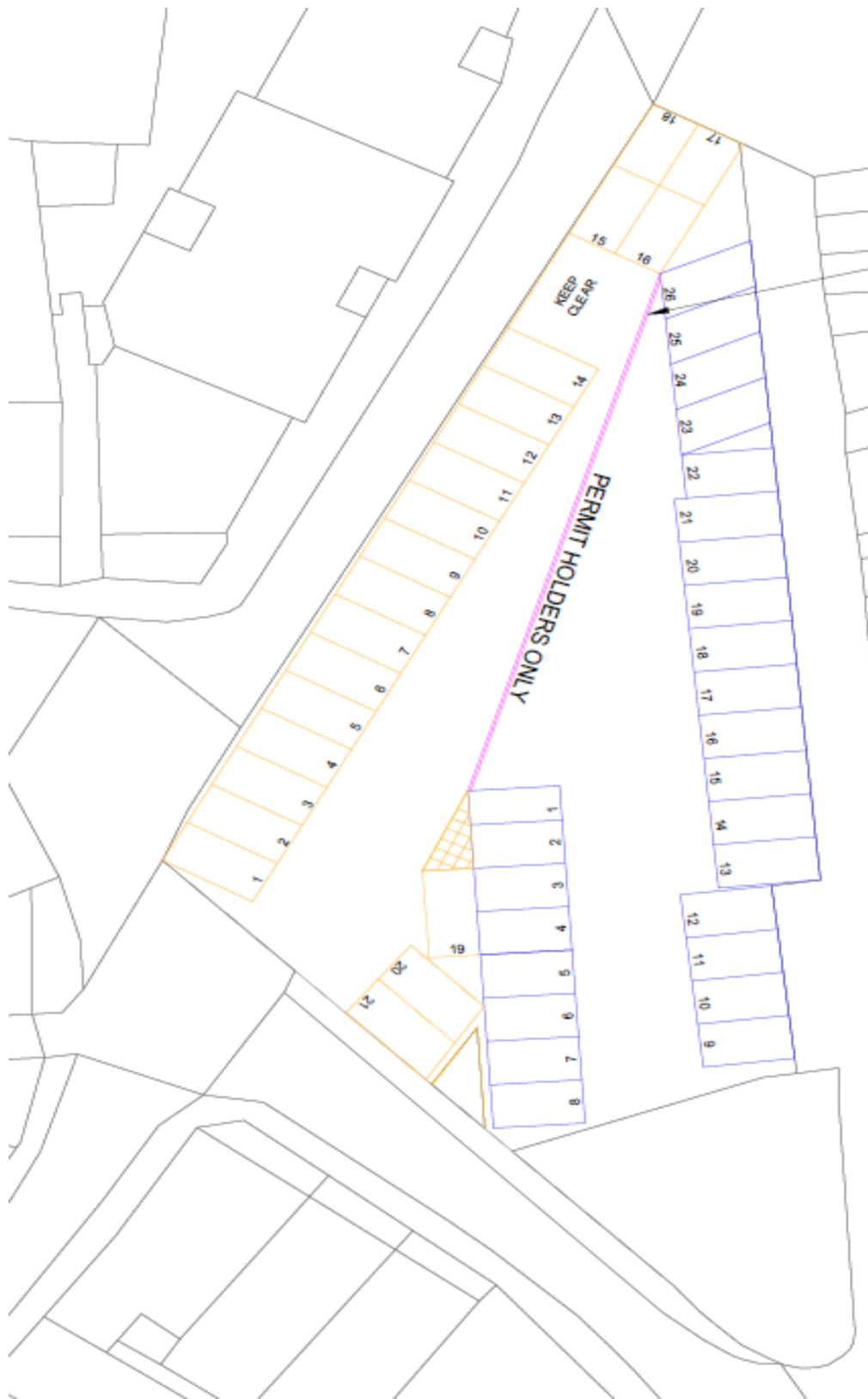
The key factors for consideration are;

- Shortage of residential parking in Sidmouth as well as the seasonal demand for tourist accommodation with associated parking
- The preference of the current leaseholders to have a way of securing a particular space for their exclusive use
- The potentially inhibitive cost of a reserved space if not being used to aid the operation of a holiday let business
- A need to balance the short stay paid parking/reserved bay ratio to ensure the availability of sufficient parking during the busiest times
- The ongoing maintenance burden and associated costs of the currently installed bollards
- The lack of distinction between the two types of parking currently available (Pay & Display/Reserved) within the car park
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Mill Street's triangular layout limits the number of bays that can be accommodated within the car park to 47. A logical split in the car park footprint would see 19 bays separated to be available for Pay & Display sessions and 28 bays available for Reserved/Permit based parking. This is broadly similar to the current split, and falls only slightly short of the known demand for reserved bays. This hybrid approach reflects the way the car park has evolved over time, from previously being a solely reserved car park, to its current use as a mixture of both types of parking.

Various designs were tested to make better use of the central area of the car park, however these did not add any additional spaces, and would most likely have made navigating the car park more difficult.





Should this approach/design be supported, different bay marking colours and very clear signage would be needed to separate and distinguish the two areas to ensure that visiting motorists did not inadvertently end up in a reserved bay. This approach would also require an increased amount of enforcement presence in the initial stages to help encourage long term compliance.

This clear division between pay & display/permit holder only parking would certainly be more accessible and easier to understand for visiting motorists, especially when compared with the current arrangements. This should encourage greater use of this car park from day visitors and town shoppers.

The proposed design represents a variation on the current mixed offering, however a more radical change could be implemented to either revert to a completely reserved car park, or offer only pay or display parking. These are summarised below;

- 1. Option 1 – Mixed usage – Shared reserved bays.** This is the split option demonstrated through the proposed layout diagram, with as many permits issued as there are bays within the reserved section. With no specific space for any particular vehicle, theoretically there will always be a space available for each permit holder. It would be extremely unlikely that all permit holders would be present within the car park at the same time, especially with various comings and goings from holiday let properties. This approach is easiest to manage for EDDC as individual leases and bollards will not be required. More visible enforcement will be needed, especially in the early stages. This may be considered a less desirable offer for perspective permit holders, as feedback suggests it is reassuring to have a protected allocated space. This approach would need to be supported by very clear signage and ground markings to stop unauthorised parking, however unauthorised parking would only impact permit holders in the circumstance of the car park being full. This mixed use option helps meet short-term parking need as well as providing a long term offer for residential and holiday home users.
- 2. Option 2 – Mixed usage - Bay exclusivity.** This would follow the proposed layout diagram Issue a specific bay number/bay lease to each permit holder. This will offer a degree of exclusivity, and freestanding cones or permanent bollards could be used to protect spaces when not in use. Unauthorised use may still occur and could have the potential to reflect badly on a particular holiday home business if an allocated space is not available due to unauthorised parking. Unlike option 1, there would be no other bays free to be used in the instance that an unauthorised vehicle was parked in a reserved bay, as they will all be allocated, regardless of whether they are being used or not.

Should bollards continue to be used to secure bays within the permit holders section of the car park, then the estimated cost of installing these would be £1,000 per bay. £28,000 in total. Ongoing maintenance and repair costs would be unknown, but should be factored in to any pricing, or be at the expense of the bay user.

- 3. Option 3 – Pay and Display only –** This option would see the entirety of the car park being used for short/long term parking, with no reserved bays.  
**As a short-term car park –** This car park would be well used by shoppers and visitors to the town, particularly during high season, and would be equally popular for all-day parking during the winter, at the current £2 all day rate.  
**As a long term car park –** If included in the current town modular permit scheme then this car park would likely be heavily oversubscribed by permit holders due to its proximity to the town, and exceptionally so during the busy holiday period, with Manor Road being the nearest alternative long stay car park.

As a pay and display only car park, parking would be on a first-come first-serve basis which would be unlikely to meet the needs of the current leaseholders, which is the reason they currently pay a premium for dedicated bay. The extra spaces would ease the pressure on other local car parks at key times, and help reduce traffic congestion in the town, however the loss of reserved bays may reduce the attractiveness of certain holiday accommodation in the town, which may result in less visitors.

- 4. Option 4 – Fully reserved car park –** This option would see the car park used only for reserved parking spaces, with no pay and display parking. The car park's prime position, as well as the shortage of nearby residential parking would likely see a strong demand for this, which would represent a return to how this car park was previously used. The

loss of short term parking may increase pressure on other nearby car parks which are already extremely busy at key times, however this approach would guarantee a level of revenue for the car park which is representative of the value of the land based on its location. A lockable barrier could be installed at the car park entrance to ensure no unauthorised parking, the cost of this installation could be recovered through the yearly fee for use of the car park.

## 5. Pricing

Should members choose a use of the car park that includes an element of reserved/permit based parking then the cost of these bays will become relevant. The current pricing model for Mill Street may (depending on individual circumstances) be effectively less expensive for 2<sup>nd</sup> home/holiday let owners than it is for residents. VAT registered businesses will most likely be able to reclaim the VAT from the annual lease fee, and may also be able to attribute the lease of the space as a business expense for accounting purposes. These options are not available to permanent residents, who also do not generate any income from renting their home to be able to assist with funding the cost of a bay.

Reserved parking is a premium arrangement, offering the convenience of a guaranteed space in an otherwise short stay car park. Other EDDC permits limit the length of stay in specific car parks, and motorists are not guaranteed a space.

A concessionary model, as below, could provide a discount to permanent residents. This could be limited to a particular number of bays within the car park, to ensure availability for existing lease holders. If the number of concessionary bays exceeded the current number of lease holders using their bays for holiday let purposes, then a selection process would need to be established to allocate the remaining bays to interested parties. The level of concession will likely dictate the amount of interest from residents in this scheme.

Roxburgh Car Park, nearby, generates £1,516 per bay (2022/23), per year, in parking revenue. A similar figure could be expected from Mill Street should the car park be used only as a short stay Pay & Display Car park.

1 - £1500 per year (including VAT)

Cost per bay - £1500 per year (incl VAT) (28 bays) - £4.11 per day				
Number of bays for permanent residents only	0	5	8	14
25% Concession	£ -	£ 5,625.00	£ 9,000.00	£ 15,750.00
50% Concession	£ -	£ 3,750.00	£ 6,000.00	£ 10,500.00
75% concession	£ -	£ 1,875.00	£ 3,000.00	£ 5,250.00
Annual income from remaining bays	£ 42,000.00	£ 34,500.00	£ 30,000.00	£ 21,000.00
<b>Total income @25%</b>		£ 40,125.00	£ 39,000.00	£ 36,750.00
<b>Total income @50%</b>		£ 38,250.00	£ 36,000.00	£ 31,500.00
<b>Total income @75%</b>		£ 36,375.00	£ 33,000.00	£ 26,250.00



2 - £1850 per year (including VAT)

Cost per bay - £1825 per year (incl VAT) (28 bays) - £5 per day				
Number of bays for permanent residents only	0	5	8	14
25% Concession	£ -	£ 6,843.75	£ 12,000.00	£ 21,000.00
50% Concession	£ -	£ 4,562.50	£ 7,300.00	£ 12,775.00
75% concession	£ -	£ 3,650.00	£ 3,650.00	£ 6,387.50
Annual income from remaining bays	£ 51,100.00	£ 41,975.00	£ 36,500.00	£ 25,550.00
<b>Total income @25%</b>		£ 48,818.75	£ 48,500.00	£ 46,550.00
<b>Total income @50%</b>		£ 46,537.50	£ 43,800.00	£ 38,325.00
<b>Total income @75%</b>		£ 45,625.00	£ 40,150.00	£ 31,937.50

3 - £2000 per year (including VAT)

Cost per bay - £2000 per year (incl VAT) (28 bays) - £5.48 per day				
Number of bays for permanent residents only		5	8	14
25% Concession	£ -	£ 7,500.00	£ 12,000.00	£ 21,000.00
50% Concession	£ -	£ 5,000.00	£ 8,000.00	£ 14,000.00
75% concession	£ -	£ 2,500.00	£ 4,000.00	£ 7,000.00
Annual income from remaining bays	£ 56,000.00	£ 46,000.00	£ 40,000.00	£ 28,000.00
<b>Total income @25%</b>		£ 53,500.00	£ 52,000.00	£ 49,000.00
<b>Total income @50%</b>		£ 51,000.00	£ 48,000.00	£ 42,000.00
<b>Total income @75%</b>		£ 48,500.00	£ 44,000.00	£ 35,000.00

4 - £2500 per year (Including VAT)

Cost per bay - £2500 per year (incl VAT) (28 bays) - £6.85 per day				
Number of bays for permanent residents only	0	5	8	14
25% Concession	£ -	£ 9,375.00	£ 15,000.00	£ 26,250.00
50% Concession	£ -	£ 6,250.00	£ 10,000.00	£ 17,500.00
75% concession	£ -	£ 2,500.00	£ 4,000.00	£ 7,000.00
Annual income from remaining bays	£ 70,000.00	£ 57,500.00	£ 50,000.00	£ 35,000.00
<b>Total income @25%</b>		£ 66,875.00	£ 65,000.00	£ 61,250.00
<b>Total income @50%</b>		£ 63,750.00	£ 60,000.00	£ 52,500.00
<b>Total income @75%</b>		£ 60,000.00	£ 54,000.00	£ 42,000.00

All figures above represent gross income

## 6. Mill Street - Summary

The resurfacing of Mill Street is a timely opportunity to review the current use/layout of this car park. The officer recommendation is based on the draft guiding principles of the EDDC Parking Strategy and attempts to find a balance between the competing needs of car park users at this location. This would involve the launch of a new reserved permit scheme that supports holiday rentals in encouraging visitors to the town, and also helps address the shortage of available residential parking in nearby streets. From a car park management perspective, the new car park design could alleviate the need for expensive to maintain and

install bollards, and increase the use of the pay and display bays within the car park by offering a better customer experience.

The current leaseholders would prefer a solution that ensures they can reserve their space for their exclusive use, however this could be mitigated through increased enforcement and the ability to for permit holders to park flexibly within any available bay in the permit holders section of the car park.

As with many decisions affecting individual car parks, all 4 options contained within this report will have knock-on implications for other car parks, as well as potentially the wider parking policy across the District.

## **Appendix 1 – Email to Mill Street Residents**

Email sent on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> August 2023

*You are receiving this email as a current lease holder for a reserved parking bay within Mill Street car park.*

*As you have probably noticed, Mill Street is in need of resurfacing works which have been scheduled in for early 2024 – (more details to follow), with these works imminent and all current leases coming to an end, we have the opportunity to review the current configuration of the car park as well as demand for permit based parking.*

*It is fair to suggest that some of the bollards have not been particularly reliable over the past few years and our new proposal is to create a clearly defined permit holders only area within the car park, and issue as many permits as there are spaces, meaning that there will always be an available space for permit holders, without any person owning any particular space within the car park. We realise that this will require regular enforcement, which we are fully prepared to deliver.*

*I am in the early stages of considering the best way to administer permits for next year, and I would very much like your feedback on the following questions that will help shape a report to our elected members on this subject;*

*1 – Are you a Sidmouth resident without a dedicated parking space at your home address?*

*2 – Do you use your space for any activity associated with operating a business i.e. guest parking for B&B/Holiday home?*

*3 – Would you be interested in purchasing a permit for the reserved area of the car park from April 2024 if this is determined as the preferred way forward?*

*4 – Do you feel that parking spaces in the reserved area of this car park should be prioritised for those that can demonstrate a residential need?*

*5 – Any further comments regarding parking in Sidmouth as a whole would also be appreciated for context.*

*There are no definitive plans at this point so I would very much appreciate your constructive views and opinions on this matter whilst we are in the early stages of planning.*

*I thank you in advance of any feedback you are able to provide.*

*Kind regards*

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**Financial implications:**

The per-bay income sought from reserved parking should be greater than that would likely be achieved through short term parking provision.

**Legal implications:**

The relevant Car Parking Order will need to be reviewed to establish whether any changes are needed as a result of the proposals in this report.