

Planning & Environment Committee

Date:	23 July 2019
Title:	Steam Car Wash Proposal – Upper High Street
Contact Officer:	Graham Hunt, Town Clerk

Purpose of Report

1. To provide background for a decision in principle on whether to allow a steam car wash activity in the Upper High Street car park.

Background

2. A local businessman and proprietor of an existing family run cleaning business based in Thame since 2010 has approached the Town Council with a proposal to provide a steam wash car cleaning / detailing service in the Upper High Street car park.
3. Before progressing to full detail, a decision in principle is required.
4. The system to be used is shown at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7OWzFVioe0>. It is claimed that there are no chemicals used, except (eco-friendly) standard spray cleaning products for interior cleaning
5. Requested location would be where the kebab van is sited. The actual cleaning unit is mobile, but it would be initially limited to a defined area.
6. Hours of operation would be 8am to 5pm, Wed-Mon, with site clear by 5:15pm, and suspension during any town events.
7. The proprietor would be responsible for establishing all required planning / street trading permissions.
8. Two parking spaces would be taken for queueing cars / cars being cleaned – and no other queueing would be allowed.
9. The machine runs on diesel – 0.6ltrs per hour during use.
10. Rental terms have not yet been fully defined. Current offer is based on number of parking spaces. A more realistic rent would be based on Kebab Van / Market linear rates.
11. Other items for further consideration after the in principle decision include:
 - a) Exact drainage requirements – though thought to be minimal
 - b) Exact queueing system, based on average time taken per car
 - c) Pre-booking arrangements – or just turn-up
 - d) Adverse weather arrangements
 - e) Smoking clinic would need to be relocated on a Friday
 - f) How queueing cars will be discounted from current parking enforcement
 - g) Competition for other local based car wash businesses – Thame Cars / Esso Garage etc
 - h) Business references have been offered – to be taken up
 - i) Agreement will be needed on allowable advertising / marketing

12. If we agree in principle, then the Town Council would seek similar “in principle” agreement from Oxfordshire County Council and South Oxfordshire District Council, although it is believed that with regard to the use of the Car Park spaces / Highway, Thame Town Council can allow such a use, as an “authorised officer” under the current agreement.

Resource Appraisal

13. Minimal officer time as part of set-up and control, similar to that required by the kebab van.
14. It would generate an additional, yet to be defined, income stream.

Risk Assessment

15. Oxfordshire County Council or South Oxfordshire District Council may not give permission.
16. There have been other similar business related approaches in the past, which have been declined, but this decision must be based on the evidence we have today.
17. Careful publicity would be required to manage expectations of Thame residents / businesses, and car park users in particular.

Legal Powers: General Power of Competence, Localism Act 2011.

Recommendation:

That the Council agrees in principle for a steam car wash operation as described in this report, and reserves the right to make a final decision based on further facts as they are established.