

Traffic fears over Southend Airport's proposed new car park



Conservative cllrs Steve Buckley (l) and Mark Flewitt (r) outside area planned for Southend Airport's new car park

[Ian Burbidge](#) / Tuesday 12 January 2016 / [News](#)

Airport bosses want to create a huge car park off a busy roundabout, sparking fears it could lead to further gridlock in Southend.

Southend Airport has drawn up plans for a 260-space car park on land off the Harp House roundabout.

With Manners Way regularly becoming jammed in the morning rush hour, and a 231-home housing estate being built on the former Prittlebrook Industrial site, concerns have been raised it will cause traffic issues.

The new car park will see passengers drive direct to the [Southend Airport](#) terminal, with a worker driving their vehicle back to the HarpHouse car park.

Airport bosses claim the valet service means no extra traffic will be generated.

Dave Holliday, 83, of Sherbourne Gardens, is not convinced.

He said: "It's going to cause a terrific issue because Manners Way is already snarled up with traffic every morning as it is.

"Even if it is a valet car park, it means that people on the early flights and late afternoon ones will be using it and that's when the road gets busy.

"It will certainly affect a lot of people."

The airport has seen passenger numbers increase since it became operational in 2012, hitting one million visitors in 2014.

Bosses have said the new car park, suitable for long stay passengers, will stop people parking in nearby residential streets.

Conservative Mark Flewitt, who represents St Laurence ward, said: "Any change to traffic around Harp House roundabout could potentially cause a lot of problems.

"Both me and fellow ward councillor Steve Buckley are equally concerned about this car park because of the potential impact it could have on traffic."

They have both called in the planning application, meaning it will be dealt with by Southend Council's development control committee. Bellway Homes is creating the huge housing estate nearby.

One exit is planned at Thornford Gardens, with traffic then going onto Manners Way.

Rita Randall, who lives in Thornford Gardens, believes surrounding roads will struggle to cope if the airport car park plan is approved.

She said: "There is going to be a hell of lot more traffic issues on the road because of this. We need to fight this."

Airport says it won't increase traffic issues

Airport chiefs insist their car plans will not increase traffic in the area.

The valet service will see customers drive their vehicles to the terminal's short stay car park, with an airport worker then driving them to the long stay car park.

Bosses believe the valet service will suit passengers who are looking to park for an extended period of time. They have said this will not result in further traffic on Manners Way and surrounding roads, which are already heavily congested at peak times.

Glyn Jones, chief executive officer of Stobart Air, said: "The operation of airport valet parking at the Warners Bridge site, which can accommodate 260 cars, will not in itself be a net generator of traffic.

"Passengers will drive to the airport, not the car park, and their cars will subsequently be conveyed between the airport and the car park for the duration the passengers are away.

“The detail of this is set out in the airport's planning application and the operation of this site is not predicted to have any impact upon road traffic conditions.”

Unofficial car parks took advantage of demand

Unofficial car parks have opened up around Southend Airport, with people looking to take advantage of demand.

Ever since the airport was rebranded under Stobart Air’s takeover and relaunched in 2012, passenger numbers have been on the rise.

For some residents it provided a business opportunity to take advantage of the busy new terminal.

Southend Airport Car Park, independent from Stobart Air, operated a 200-space facility on Temple Farm Industrial Estate without planning permission.

It was shut down by Southend Council, with the Government upholding the decision.

An Echo investigation found that the firm was using free spaces at the terminal to park customers’ cars in a valet service, but was asking them to pay full price.

When alerted, Stobart put a stop to it back in 2013.

Share article

Rising demand for the airport saw passengers park in Manners Way in a bid to save car park costs.

In response, council officials painted yellow lines to stop holidaymakers parking there for free between 8am and 6pm.