

Councillors Rose Williams (Chair),
Eden, Grashoff, Hoskin and Khan

To all Members of the Access &
Disabilities Working Group

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**NOTICE OF MEETING - ACCESS AND DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP - THURSDAY
25 JUNE 2015**

A meeting of the Access and Disabilities Working Group will be held on **THURSDAY 25 JUNE 2015 at 2.00pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading.**

The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

AGENDA

	<u>PAGE NO</u>
1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS	-
2. COUNCILLORS' DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS	-
Councillors to declare any personal and prejudicial interests they may have in relation to the items on the agenda.	
3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 MARCH 2015	1-4
4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES	-

5. **PHYSICAL DISABILITIES AND SENSORY NEEDS EVENT - 18 FEBRUARY 2015 - FEEDBACK** -
- READING STATION - NETWORK RAIL**
- Karen Watts, Network Rail
6. **ENERGY SAVING - READING CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU** -
- Denise Huxtable, Reading CAB
7. **TRAFFIC LIGHTS AT JUNCTION OF BROAD STREET AND WEST STREET (TARGET JUNCTION)** 5-10
- Attached is a report that is being considered at the Traffic Management Sub-Committee on Wednesday 17 June 2015.
8. **ISSUES LIST - a look at the progress with the ongoing 'Issues List' (please see form printed at the back of the agenda papers)** 11
9. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** -
10. **DATE AND TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS** -
- The next meeting will be held on Thursday 17 September 2015 at 2pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading, RG1 2LU.

ACCESS & DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MINUTES - 19 MARCH 2015

Present:

Councillors Eden (Chair), Khan and R Williams.

Also in attendance:

Keith Hester	Berkshire County Blind Society
Alan Fleming	Enrych Berkshire
Joel Young	Guide Dogs
Derek Woad	Member of the Public
Liz Cheyney	Member of the Public
Diane Goodlock	MS Society Reading
Trish Wright	MS Therapy Centres/Readibus
Laxmi Kachwaha	Readibus
Peter Absolom	Readibus
Lisa Bamsey	Readibus & Service User
Jenny Turner	Readibus/Arthritis Care/Crossroads
Bob Bristow	Reading Association for the Blind
Tony Pettitt	Reading Buses
Simon Beasley	RBC - Network and Parking Services Manager
Nina Crispin	RBC - Consultation and Engagement Officer
Amy Bryan	RBC - Committee Services

Apologies:

Councillors Gavin and Vickers
Sian Hooley
Carol Froud
Tisha Buckle
Dorothy Townsend

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2014 were agreed as a correct record.

2. MATTERS ARISING

Further to Minute 8 of the previous meeting, representatives of Enrych Berkshire and Reading Talking Newspaper reported that they had not been notified of the Special Shopping Event and requested that they be notified of the event for 2015.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

3. TRAFFIC LIGHTS AT JUNCTION OF BROAD STREET AND WEST STREET

Simon Beasley, Network and Parking Services Manager, attended the meeting to talk about the Target Junction, at Broad Street and West Street. Simon explained that the traffic lights had failed for a period of over one week at this junction and during this time nobody, except Reading Buses, contacted the Council about it. Following this outage the Council had considered turning the traffic lights off, as had been done at Jacksons Corner. Simon emphasised that this was a trial and people were asked to share their experiences, which would be considered before a decision was made about what to do with the junction permanently. Simon

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reported that a report would be submitted to the Traffic Management Sub-Committee in June 2015. Anyone wishing to submit feedback on the trial should telephone the Council on 0118 937 3787.

The Group raised the following issues and opinions:

- There had been no consultation before the lights were switched off. The Group should have been informed before it happened;
- It was dangerous to cross at the junction;
- Trying to cross the road at the junction created anxiety;
- Trying to cross the road at the junction after school leaving time was impossible;
- People shouldn't have to ask for help to cross the road;
- The buses were now quieter and it was more difficult to hear them approaching;
- Shared spaces had been a disaster, such as in Blackpool;
- Would it be possible to reduce movement complexity at the junction?
- People needed time to get used to the changes;
- Could safer alternative routes be promoted?

Tony Pettitt, Reading Buses, explained that the buses had to loop round a pedestrian core to get as close to the centre of town as they could and there was no alternative route. Tony also said that Reading Buses had made their drivers aware of the changes and had instructed all drivers to be careful of pedestrians and they had a self-imposed speed limit of 5mph through the junction. Tony added that Reading Buses had benefitted so far during the trial as buses were running closer to time in the town centre.

AGREED:

- (1) That the position be noted;
- (2) That anyone who wished to feedback their experiences of the junction should do so by telephoning the Council on 0118 937 3787;
- (3) That the report that would be submitted to the Traffic Management Sub-Committee in June 2015 regarding the junction be circulated to the Group once it was published.

4. PHYSICAL DISABILITIES AND SENSORY NEEDS EVENT - 18 FEBRUARY 2015 - FEEDBACK

Nina Crispin, Consultation and Engagement Officer, attended the meeting and provided feedback on the Physical Disabilities and Sensory Needs Event that had been held on 18 February 2015.

Nina explained that there had been three presentations, one from the Oracle's ShopMobility service, one from Helen Bryant, Reading Borough Council's Access Officer, on the nationwide web-based directory directenquiries.com, and from Cris Butler, Assistant Network Manager, about blue badge parking in the town centre.

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The Group made the following comments:

- You could not park at ShopMobility for free but it was not clear whether or not you could drop someone off without charge;
- There was no signage in the town centre regarding ShopMobility at the Oracle;
- One individual with a larger vehicle wasn't able to park at the train station due to height restrictions and when parking on the road had been moved along by taxi drivers;
- A Changing Places had been requested at the train station but this had not been installed when the station was upgraded;
- Why was there only one wheelchair bay on Reading's buses and the screen was positioned behind anyone in the wheelchair bay?
- Number 16 buses did not have audio description.

AGREED:

- (1) That the Chair investigate the following queries:

whether you could drop someone off at the Oracle's ShopMobility facility without paying a parking charge;

the current situation with regard to another Changing Places in Reading town centre;

- (2) That the Chair write to the taxi association about their interaction with users of mobility vehicles;
- (3) That the Chair write to Reading Buses with regard to why there was only one wheelchair bay on each bus and that the screen was positioned behind anyone using a wheelchair;
- (4) That this item be included on the next agenda.

5. DISABILITY PRIDE - VOLUNTEERS

Councillor Eden reported that volunteers were needed to help set up a Disability Pride Day. Anyone interested in helping should contact Councillor Eden or Helen Bryant.

AGREED: That anyone who would like to volunteer to help with the organisation of a disability pride day in Reading contact Councillor Eden or Helen Bryant.

6. ISSUES LIST

The following issues were reported:

- The steps on the east side of the circle of seats in Broad Street were unmarked and 'hidden';
- There were no rails at the train station interchange.

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AGREED: That the position be noted.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Care Act

It was reported that changes to the Care Act started to be implemented in April 2015 and anyone with queries or concerns could contact Healthwatch. Healthwatch Reading could be contacted on 0118 902 3912 or info@healthwatchreading.co.uk.

AGREED: That the position be noted.

Visual Audit of Town Centre

A visual audit of the town centre was requested.

AGREED: That a visual audit of the town centre be organised and the whole Group be invited to participate.

Fire Checks

Anyone with mobility issues or visual or auditory impairment may qualify for a free Home Fire Safety Check either through Social Services or Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Services.

AGREED: That the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service be invited to a future meeting.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Access & Disabilities Working Group would next meet on Thursday 25 June 2015 at 2pm.

(The meeting opened at 2.05pm and closed at 4.00pm)

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE		
DATE:	17 JUNE 2015	AGENDA ITEM:	8
TITLE:	TARGET JUNCTION IMPROVEMENT REVIEW & OPTIONS (BROAD STREET / ST MARY'S BUTTS / OXFORD ROAD / WEST STREET)		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	TONY PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	TRANSPORT STRATEGY	WARDS:	ABBEY
LEAD OFFICER:	SIMON BEASLEY	TEL:	0118 937 2228
JOB TITLE:	NETWORK & PARKING SERVICES MANAGER	E-MAIL:	simon.beasley@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Sub-Committee on the trial switch-off of the traffic signals at the 'Target junction' which is the intersection of Broad Street / St Mary's Butts / Oxford Road / West Street. This report sets out the response to the trial so far and some proposals on what could be achieved should we minded to remove the traffic signals permanently.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 The Sub- Committee is asked to note the report.
- 2.2 The Sub-Committee notes representations and feedback so far and is recommended to continue with the trial to allow for further public consultation.
- 2.3 That the proposals shown on drawing TC/target concepts/01 be the basis of a public consultation reporting back to Traffic Management Sub-Committee in September.
- 2.4 That specific meetings be arranged with representatives of The Guide Dogs for the Blind and Blind Associations, the Access and Disabilities Group, Reading Buses and other relevant organisations.
- 2.5 That the Sub-Committee consider comments and detailed plans and confirm a final scheme proposal in September.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Reading Borough Council's Local Transport Plan provides the policy context for the proposed review.

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 During early 2014 the traffic signals failed at the 'Target' junction of Broad Street with West Street and St Mary's Butts. Despite all the signals being out for over a week we received no complaints from members of the public and the only enquiries came from Reading Buses, who asked 'when will the traffic signals be repaired'. Throughout this period of traffic signal failure various observations were made by RBC officers, James Freeman of Reading Buses and the traffic signal contractor who worked on the fault to restore the signals. The observations lead to the question as to whether or not the traffic signals actually served any purpose. It seemed that during their failure both pedestrians and public transport appeared to benefit.

- 4.2 In January 2015 the traffic signals were switched off for a trial period (of at least six months) to allow all users to experience the junction in an "uncontrolled" state. There was initially media interest which prompted a small number of negative responses expressing concern at the idea. Since then, both The Guide Dogs for the Blind and the Berkshire Blind Society have collected a petition against the trial asking for the traffic signals to be switched back on. Very little feedback has been received from the general public.

4.3 PUBLIC COMMENTS

The main area of concern remains crossing at the junction by blind/partially sighted people who say they cannot tell from which direction vehicles are approaching. A petition was presented to the Sub-Committee in March and this has been resubmitted more recently with additional names added. The initial response to the trial switch-off generated a few comments to the effect that drivers did not know how to use the area with examples of buses meeting within the junction. This appears to have become much more settled as time has gone on. Both drivers and pedestrians appear to have overcome the initial difference of using the junction without the lights and there is no practical evidence that road safety has been compromised in any way. An independent road safety assessment study has been carried out. This concluded that the risk of an injury (to anyone) at the junction, as a result of a collision, was low prior to the trial and remains so without the traffic signals operating.

4.4 OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

- To switch the lights back on at the Target junction.
- To continue with the experimental switch-off
- To remove the traffic signals and reconfigure the junction to create a "shared space" facility that caters better for blind/partially sighted people, especially across Broad Street (west).

4.5 OPPORTUNITIES WITHOUT THE SIGNALS

- i) Should the switch-off become permanent the traffic signal equipment would need to be removed. This would 'open up' the area and actually improve the junction for blind/partially sighted by removing clutter. However, we would not want to open up the carriageway allowing vehicles to encroach on space currently used by pedestrians. The vehicle lines should be maintained and the narrow single-file section on the St Mary's Butts side of the junction needs to remain. It may be possible to create narrow single-file sections on the Broad Street (west) and West Street approaches where specific facilities for blind/partially sighted could be created.
 - ii) On the Broad Street (west) side of the junction the raised section of the carriageway extends the greatest distance from the centre of the junction at around 30m. This approach is also a significant bus stop for many services. This west side of the junction may provide an opportunity to consider a specific route for disabled pedestrians. By being further away from the centre of the junction vehicles are able to fully straighten within this section when heading west. By the time that vehicles reach this point their direction of travel is much easier to determine for blind/partially sighted users if this is deemed an issue. Consequently there may be a number of possibilities to improve the route for pedestrians at this point.
 - iii) The narrow carriageway section on the St Mary's Butts side of the junction should remain single file for vehicles and this potentially completes a defined route for blind/partially sighted users into Broad Street (east).
 - iv) There is also a need to consider improving the visibility for bus drivers when turning from West Street towards Broad Street Mall and Oxford Road. With a relatively simple alteration to the junction or parking without the traffic signals in place, visibility can be improved significantly.
- 4.6 Removal of the traffic signals and current guard rail will enable a better use of the space. The opportunity exists to use this space for something else. Cycle parking currently exists around the junction and this could be enhanced within the 'reclaimed' space. The 'target' itself is a feature that has existed for some time. The large granite sets that form the rings are not very practical (becoming loose and unstable) which has led to a legacy of maintenance problems. These sets should be removed but the character of the junction should be maintained.
- 4.7 Based on what we have learnt so far from feedback, which has mainly been from pedestrians, the predominant concern is how blind/partially sighted users negotiate the junction. Aside from the petition we have received less than ten written comments expressing concern to the trial switch-off of the traffic signals. By comparison, we received around twenty written responses to the

Jacksons Corner traffic signal removal. Reading Taxi Association has expressed support for the trial and ultimately have encouraged us to consider the permanent removal of the traffic signals. The town centre businesses have so far been silent.

- 4.8 Reading Buses report that there has been a positive impact on operational performance as a result of the switch-off of the traffic lights at the St Mary's Butts/Oxford Road junction. Approximately 1,400 bus trips use that junction each weekday, carrying around 40,000 passengers a day. The majority of those with bus journeys starting and/or finishing in the central area need to travel through the junction in one or both directions of travel.

Initial analysis has confirmed that the company is seeing shorter journey times on most routes using the junction, (between 30 and 60 seconds per trip) leading to a 39% decrease in late-running buses on the one corridor that has been examined in more detail.

There are also improvements to local air quality. Reading Buses has estimated that the change has eliminated a cumulative 12 hours of bus idling each weekday with commensurate reductions in particulate and nitrous oxides emissions.

4.9 CONCLUSION

The switch-off has proved that pedestrians and vehicles can safely use this junction without the aid of traffic signals. However, the concerns from blind/partially sighted users need be considered if the traffic signals are permanently removed. Removal of the traffic signals opens up the junction, creating opportunities to enhance the "shared space" area, provide a dedicated route for blind/partially sighted users, improve cycle parking and meet the objectives of improved road safety and public transport journey times.

- 5 Drawing: TC/target concepts/01 gives an idea of some of the options for consideration as explained in 4.5

6 CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 6.1 This proposal supports the aims and objectives of the Local Transport Plan and contributes to the Council's strategic aims, as set out below:

- To develop Reading as a Green City with a sustainable environment and economy at the heart of the Thames Valley
- To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 None at this time

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None arising from this report.

9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 In addition to the Human Rights Act 1998 the Council is required to comply with the Equalities Act 2010. Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

9.2 An independent road safety assessment study has been carried out.

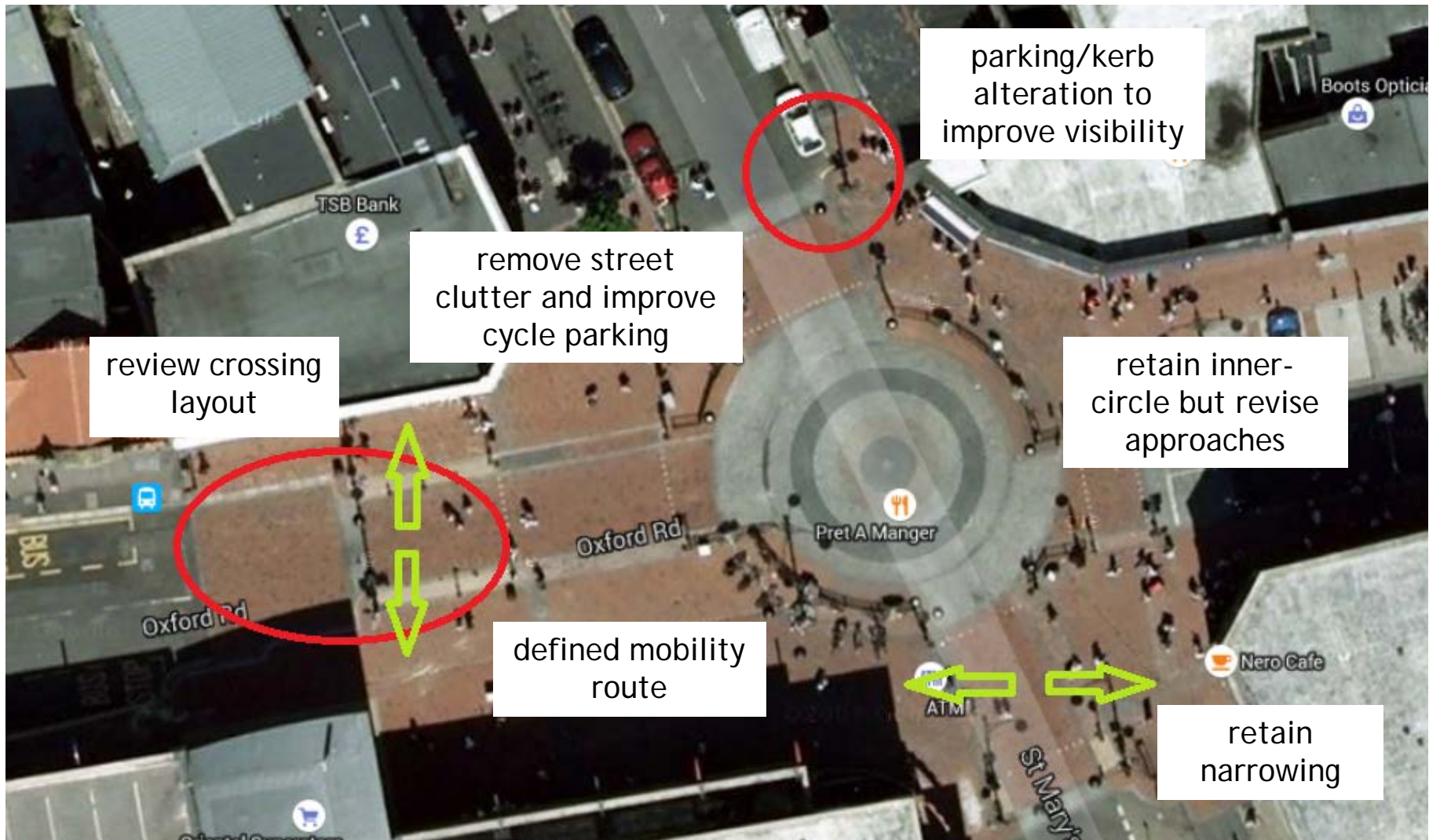
10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Funding would need to be identified from transport budgets to take any scheme forward.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 TM Sub March 2015

Target Junction opportunities



drawing TC/target concepts/01

PLEASE USE THIS FORM TO RECORD ANY ACCESS OR
DISABILITIES ISSUES THAT YOU WISH THE COUNCIL
TO INVESTIGATE

FILL IN AND HAND IN AT THE ACCESS AND
DISABILITIES WORKING GROUP MEETING

Name:

Contact Details (if you wish the Council to let you know the
progress with your enquiry - a telephone number or email address
would be useful):

Issues: