

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	4 APRIL 2017	AGENDA ITEM:	5a
TITLE:	PETITIONS REQUESTING REINSTATEMENT OF THE GARRARD STREET AND STATION APPROACH TAXI RANKS		
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To report to the Committee the receipt of two petitions asking the Council to reinstate the recently closed Garrard Street and Station Approach Taxi Ranks.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the report.
- 2.2 That the lead petitioners be informed of the reasons for closing the Garrard Street and Station Approach taxi ranks.
- 2.3 That Officers continue to work with the Taxi Associations to investigate potential measures to enhance the taxi rank provision in the town centre.
- 2.4 That the request to open access to Friar Street from Greyfriars Road for buses, taxis and cycles be progressed as a part of the permanent traffic regulation order due to be promoted this year.
- 2.5 That the lead petitioners be informed accordingly.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The provision of waiting/parking restrictions is specified within existing Traffic Management Policies and Standards.

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The Council has received two petitions from taxi drivers, and taxi users requesting the reinstatement of the Garrard Street and Station Approach (horseshoe) taxi ranks.

- 4.2 The wording of each petition is as follows:-

Taxi Drivers

"Petition against the closure of the main rank and proposals - I am signing this petition document against the current closure of the main rank, Garrard Street and horseshoe rank.

The petition is objecting against the closure and suggest the following proposals:

- 1 - Garrard Street/Horseshoe rank to be reinstated*
- 2 - Station Road/Friar Street to be used as a feeder to horseshoe rank*
- 3 - Oakford Social Club/Railair Link and Forbury Road to be used as a feeder to the horseshoe rank - 15/16 cab rank."*

Taxi users

"Petition to reinstate original taxi rank outside the station - We the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge our leaders to act now, to change back to a convenient taxi rank like before.

I am not happy with the new taxi rank layout because:

- 1 - Signs are not clear when you come out of the Station*
- 2 - Can't see the taxi rank when we come out of the Station*
- 3 - Takes too long to get to the ranks*
- 4 - Costs more to get home*
- 5 - Walking down steps especially with the elderly, children, special needs and luggage*
- 6 - More traffic*
- 7 - Railair passengers can't find the taxi ranks."*

- 4.3 The following information was reported and associated actions were approved at the Traffic Management Sub-Committee in November 2016:-

In April 2011, a series of changes were made to the movement and waiting restrictions in Reading Town Centre in preparation for the redevelopment of Reading Station. Various changes were also made to the taxi ranks throughout the Town Centre to take into account the changes to Station Hill and the new footprint of the Station Western Gate Line and entrance.

To assist the Hackney Trades whilst Station Hill was closed (to build the new Station layout and to build the new lowered southwest interchange), it was agreed to provide a temporary feeder rank in Garrard Street to link to the rank located on the east side of the station, also known as the Horseshoe Rank. The new Station and interchanges were opened in 2014/2015 and all works are now complete.

Throughout the redevelopment of Reading Station, Officers were also closely monitoring the redevelopment of Station Hill by Sackville/Stanhope and Thames Tower. It was acknowledged by all that there would be a requirement to close Garrard Street at the eastern end to facilitate construction of these developments at some point, and this would mean losing the temporary feeder rank.

The developers of Thames Tower have recently approached the Council to progress the section 278 highway works associated with the development. The highway works will include repaving the entire footway on the east elevation of Thames Tower with materials matching the existing paving on the Station southern public square, a rationalisation of the existing street furniture, relocation of the bus inspectors hut and improvements to the existing central island where the statue of King Edward VII is located.

These works will require the closure of the bus stops, and footway whilst they are carried out. A temporary footway will have to be provided within the bus stop layby and horseshoe rank to cater for the very high pedestrian movements to and from the Station. The works are currently planned to commence at the beginning of January 2017 until February/March 2017.

Clearly, to facilitate the works, the taxi rank in Garrard Street and the horseshoe rank in Station Approach will have to close under a temporary traffic regulation order.

With this in mind, Officers believe that due to the duration of the Thames Tower works, and subsequent future phases of the Station Hill development, the point has been reached where the Garrard Street feeder rank is no longer fit for purpose and would recommend permanently closing it from commencement of the Thames Tower S278 Highway works. Officers would also recommend permanently closing the horseshoe rank, as there is no alternative taxi feeder

location in Blagrove Street, and the future management and operation of just a five space rank would pose a risk to the overall operation of the Town Centre traffic system by overranking.

To help alleviate the impact of this change on the taxi trades, Officers propose introducing the following permanent changes in the Town Centre:-

- Convert the bus stop on the north side of Station Hill (near the Railway Club) to a permanent taxi rank.*
- Make the bus stops on the south side of Station Hill (Football services) shared use (Bus and Taxi).*
- Convert a section of Greyfriars Road on the west side into a feeder rank to Station Hill.*
- Change the current bus only restriction on the eastern side of the northern interchange to permit taxis, and allow the right turn out of the interchange to Vastern Road.*
- Review a potential route for taxis to the current bus only section of the northern interchange from the head of the taxi rank*
- Review the locations of the existing part time ranks in Station Road with a view to a continuous rank rather than split between bus stops.*
- Improve signs within the Station and on the highway to the north and south of the Station to direct members of the public to the taxi ranks.*
- Utilise the road space previously used as the horseshoe rank as a bus stop to ensure drop off/private hire vehicles do not use the area.*
- Adjust the following existing taxi ranks:-*
 - 1. Move the Friar Street shared use rank outside Hickies to the bus stop outside the County Court in Friar Street.*
 - 2. Change the operational time of the rank in Gun Street to 9pm -6am.*
 - 3. Change the rank in Bridge Street to 8pm-8am and promote a new taxi rest facility between 8am and 8pm.*
 - 4. Investigate shared use ranks in the disabled bays) located in St Marys Butts (only to operate 8pm-8am and Kings Street.*
 - 5. Change the existing Oxford Road rank located near Cheapside to a permanent rest rank.*

4.4 The changes were introduced on Monday 20th February 2017, albeit prior to the commencement of the Thames Tower highway works which were delayed until 9th March 2017.

4.5 As detailed within the Traffic Management Sub-Committee report in November 2016, the Garrard Street taxi rank was always temporary, and the Hackney Carriage trades were aware that at some point the

Council would need to remove it. Officers have reviewed all potential options to try to maintain the horseshoe rank on the east side of the Station, but as road space is at such a premium in the Town Centre, there is simply no extra capacity at this time to provide a feeder rank to successfully serve the horseshoe rank. The Council has worked with the taxi trades to develop the mitigation measures listed and it is hoped they will help alleviate any impact. The taxi trades have since requested some further changes to assist town centre access and this is detailed in paragraph 4.7.

- 4.6 The Committee is asked to note the petitions and officers will continue to work with the Taxi Associations on potential measures to enhance the taxi rank provision in the town centre.
- 4.7 The Committee is also asked to approve the inclusion of a new movement restriction permitting access to Friar Street from Greyfriars Road for buses, taxis and cycles as a part of the permanent traffic regulation order (approved at the Traffic Management Sub-Committee in November 2016) due to be promoted this year.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 This proposal supports the aims and objectives of the Local Transport Plan and helps to deliver the following Corporate Plan Service Priorities:
- Keeping the town clean, green and active.
 - Providing infrastructure to support the economy.
 - Remaining financially sustainable to deliver these service priorities.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 The lead petitioner will be informed of the findings of the Committee.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None arising from this report.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 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.

8.2 The Council will carry out an equality impact assessment scoping exercise prior to proposing the introduction of any changes to the highway.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None arising from this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Traffic Management Sub-Committee report - November 2016.