

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE - 19 MARCH 2018

QUESTION NO. 1 in accordance with Standing Order No.36

Wayne Rockell to ask the Chair of Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee:

Homes of Multiple Occupancy - Parking Spaces

Could I please enquire whether the subsequent impact following the conversion of previously 2 or 3 bedroom family terraced homes into homes of multiple occupancy, catering for 6 or more separate occupants, has on the number of available parking spaces in areas of permit parking, taking into account that each occupant may be prepared to pay the extra permit costs.

REPLY by the Chair of the Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee (Councillor David Absolom):

I invite Councillor Page, the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by the Lead Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport (Councillor Page):

I thank Mr Rockell for his question.

Under the permit scheme rules, Homes of Multi-Occupancy are allowed the same permit allocation that existed previously as a single property, namely two permits per property. So, regardless of how many people live in a HMO the permit allocation remains the same at a maximum of 2 permits.

The Council does have discretion to issue a third permit but, in most cases, the Traffic Management Sub-Committee will not issue third discretionary permits in zones which are already over 100% allocation. Beyond this there are no fixed criteria for the granting of discretionary permits, as each application is dealt with on its own merits, is usually personal to the applicant and not to the property and, as such, the decision does not set a precedent for future applications either at that property or elsewhere.

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QUESTION NO. 2 in accordance with Standing Order No.36

Enrico Petrucco to ask the Chair of Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee:

Low Emission Zone Scheme

Reading Friends of the Earth recognises that the recent Client Earth court case ruling on the 22nd of February has the potential to enable significant health improvements to Reading in the next few years. At the Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee in November 2017 Reading Borough Council responded to suggest that they have been very interested to establish a Clean Air Zone in Reading since having submitted a proposal for Government funding in 2009. RBC further mentioned that with the new technology now available it would look at options again with the view to cover the whole IDR with a Low Emission Zone. We welcome further discussion with RBC and would like to help support establishment of a Low (or preferably Ultralow) Emission Zone. It could cover the whole IDR, though in particular it should include both bridges and encourage traffic with no business in Reading to use alternatives as per the road pricing recommendation from Reading's Independent Transport Commission in 2008.

A significant road charging scheme across Reading could cost less than £0.4million in the first year, which is much cheaper than the current East Reading MRT estimated budget and could actually make that MRT scheme obsolete due to resultant traffic reduction.

Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) systems are cheap; integrated modules with illumination, processing & communications are £5k per module, plus a 3G communications contract of £30/month. Though there is already a back office for bus lane ANPR monitoring in Reading, the cost to set up and operate a complete provision to serve a Reading ANPR charging system is estimated to be not more than £200k in the first year. However, the back office cost could be an order of magnitude less expensive. Alternatively, Transport for London may be able to supply the service.

An ANPR scheme could be operated with minimal political downside if approached in the right way and if suitable exemptions and concessions are in place for relevant residents. The scheme may generate revenue, though for public acceptability it should only cover its running costs with any excess revenue ring-fenced to improve, promote, and support alternative modes of transport. At a maximum of 30 modules required to serve the IDR, both bridges, and two arterial routes the total first year cost would be less than £400k.

The 2011 census found 42k people commute into Reading daily. If that number was unchanged and only 10% come from far afield (though it's probably more) and only half of that number pass 1 bridge with ANPR priced at 50p per pass, inbound and outbound, it would generate £2100/day or about £545k/yr accounting for weekdays only. Thus, an

ANPR system could conceivably pay for itself rapidly - even with free weekend travel for all and not accounting for IDR charging.

If the resulting reduction in through traffic was on the order of 30% then the ANPR scheme could still pay for itself in the first year and provide significant reduction in air pollution. Further revenue and reduction in air pollution would be expected due to IDR Low Emission Zone charging. Excess revenue equally distributed to facilitate alternative modes of transport would further decrease air pollution.

We appreciate that these are initial ideas and proposals, and that computer modelling of any proposed scheme will be necessary by suitably qualified transport planners, but we would like these ideas to be given serious consideration.

In light of our prior petition and the expected new Government air pollution action plan due in October, will RBC look at how a Low Emission Zone or even an Ultra-Low Emission Zone scheme could bring clean air and lower congestion to Reading? If so then will the investigation be performed as a higher priority over other air pollution and traffic management measures?

REPLY by the Chair of the Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee (Councillor David Absolom):

I invite Councillor Page, the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by the Lead Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport (Councillor Page):

I thank Mr Petrucco for his question, containing some interesting suggestions.

The latest position regarding the Council's plans to improve air quality in Reading will be discussed further at Item 10 of the agenda. As set out in the report for that item, next steps will be dependent on the level of funding made available by Government and the proposals contained within its draft Clean Air Plan which is due to be published in April/May.

The Council continues to make considerable progress in implementing our Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP), with the objective of delivering improvements which would significantly reduce current pollutant levels and bring them below the National Air Quality Objectives.

However it is recognised that a great deal more could be achieved with additional support from central Government. We are therefore hopeful that the latest Client Earth court case ruling will result in greater resources being allocated to local authorities, including Reading, to investigate and implement measures to further improve air quality in their areas.

We will continue to emphasize to Government the need to undertake feasibility studies into a range of demand management schemes to help reduce traffic levels in Reading, particularly to and from the town centre.

It is however important to recognise that the introduction of such demand management measures would further support the need for enhanced sustainable transport provision in Reading, such as the proposed East Reading MRT scheme, rather than making such schemes obsolete.

Viable alternatives to the private car will need to be in place and continue to be delivered alongside any demand management measures. This approach will maximise the benefits delivered to congestion levels and air quality whilst ensuring that residents are able to continue to access employment, education and leisure facilities in an affordable and sustainable way.

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QUESTION NO. 3 in accordance with Standing Order No.36

John Mallaney to ask the Chair of Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee:

East Reading MRT

Does the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport believe that the Council's MRT road scheme - planned to be built along the riverside at a cost to the council of £4.9million - will reduce pollution and improve air quality for people living in East Reading ?

REPLY by the Chair of the Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee (Councillor David Absolom):

I invite Councillor Page, the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by the Lead Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport (Councillor Page):

The short answer is yes.

As Mr Mullaney knows only too well, the East Reading MRT scheme is a proposed public transport, pedestrian and cycle route from the A3290, (and the separate new park & ride facility currently being delivered by Wokingham Borough Council) to Napier Road, Reading town centre and the railway station.

The MRT scheme is a key element of the wider sustainable transport strategy for Reading and the A329 corridor, and is adopted policy of both Reading and Wokingham Borough Councils. The scheme will provide substantial benefits to Reading and the wider area by providing an attractive sustainable alternative to the private car, helping to manage the significant levels of development planned to provide many more jobs and homes for residents in Reading and Wokingham.

The business case for the scheme was approved by the Berkshire Local Transport Body last November. As part of this process the business case was independently scrutinised, confirming that the scheme represents high value for money in accordance with central Government guidance. The modelling undertaken to inform development of the business case shows that forecast traffic levels will be reduced, in comparison to forecast future conditions without the scheme in place, with resultant air quality benefits.

This is due to people switching to use the MRT route into Reading rather than the private car due to the provision of significantly enhanced public transport services

enabled by the scheme. An example of this is a reduction in rat running traffic on residential streets between the east side of Reading and the town centre, which will directly benefit residents living in these streets.

Furthermore the East MRT scheme will provide additional capacity for future increases in travel demand due to the planned development to the east of Reading. If the scheme was not delivered, this development would result in further congestion along the A4 into Reading (in terms of both volume and time period) and increased rat running traffic, as more people would attempt to drive into Reading with limited alternative methods available.

The construction of this important link means that, should the funding be available, we would be able to add a light rail provision from Reading Station to Wokingham, Bracknell and other

The Council has secured over £19m of funding from central Government for the scheme with further contributions from the private sector to be provided through the planning process. The Council will continue to progress the scheme alongside the programme of major transport schemes that are currently being delivered to help achieve the objectives set out in our planning, climate change and transport strategies.

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QUESTION NO. 4 in accordance with Standing Order No.36

John Mallaney to ask the Chair of Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee:

East Reading MRT

Does the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport believe that the Council's MRT road scheme - planned to be built along the riverside at a cost to the council of £4.9million - will reduce congestion on the roads in East Reading ?

REPLY by the Chair of the Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport Committee (Councillor David Absolom):

I invite Councillor Page, the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by the Lead Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport (Councillor Page):

I refer Mr Mullaney to the answer I have just given to his previous question.