

**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE & SPORT**

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| TO: | TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE | | |
| DATE: | 14 JUNE 2017 | AGENDA ITEM: | 14 |
| TITLE: | TRAFFIC MIRRORS | | |
| LEAD COUNCILLOR: | COUNCILLOR TONY PAGE | PORTFOLIO: | STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT |
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To inform the sub-committee of the proposal to alter our policy on the placing of traffic mirrors within the public highway.
- 1.2 Following the publication of a revised Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions in 2016 the Department for Transport (DfT) will no longer provide special authorisation for the use of traffic mirrors. Therefore, this report sets out an alteration to the current policy to not allow traffic mirrors based on the previous position of the DfT. Our current policy on the use of traffic mirrors is found with the Traffic Management, Policy and Standards; section 1.5.3. and it is this that will be altered as set out within section 6.0 of this report.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Sub-Committee note this report.
- 2.2 That the Sub-committee agree to the alteration of the existing policy on the use of traffic mirrors within the public highway as set out in section 6.0 of this report.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The provision of road signs and associated criteria is specified within existing Traffic Management Policies and Standards.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Historically traffic mirrors placed within the public highway have required specific (central government) authorisation granted by the DfT. Mirrors sited at inappropriate locations can be hazardous and a hindrance to drivers rather than improve road safety. Thus the DfT imposed very strict control on the use of traffic mirrors to ensure that consideration was given to every other possible option before considering a mirror. The purpose of a mirror is to provide a level of visibility to an otherwise severely restricted junction where other traffic management solutions have failed to improve visibility. As a part of the DfT authorisation the local highway authority was required to demonstrate that all other options have been properly and fully considered and/or applied. Where no other option can be applied or any change (to the junction) had failed to improve road safety an application for a mirror could be made to the DfT. Authorisation of a mirror, however, had never been guaranteed and the responsibility to improve the visibility of the junction remained with the local highway authority.
- 4.2 Our current policy (Traffic Management, Policy and Standards; section 1.5.3) simply says: *The Highway Authority accepts the Department for Transport (DfT) guidelines, that the provision of traffic mirrors should be discouraged in general because of the risk of confusion to drivers not accustomed to their use. Current advice precludes their use on exits from private drives. Each mirror requires specific DfT authorisation, which requires that no alternative measure is practical to achieve adequate visibility.*
- 4.3 For the Borough of Reading there is no special authorisation granted to the local highway authority for the use of traffic mirrors at any location. Within the past year we have twice requested a search by the DfT for the authorisation certificate for the mirror placed on St Peters Hill opposite The Warren. On both occasions the DfT have responded that no such record exists. In light of the poor condition of the mirror on St Peters Hill and absence of special authorisation the mirror was removed in October 2016.

5.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 Following the revision of the Traffic Signs Regulations & General Directions (TSRGD) 2016 a traffic mirror is now defined as a prescribed sign. The TSRGD is the primary legislation that defines signing and lining to be used within the public highway. In the case of a traffic mirror the TSRGD defines just the size and shape and is silent on its application. However, since the publication of the previous TSRGD in 2002 the DfT position has been to not allow new mirrors to be placed on the public highway.
- 5.2 The DfT position prior to 2016 is that mirrors increase safety risks, which include;
- reflect light and interfere with a driver's vision
 - reduce the ability to judge an oncoming vehicle's speed
 - create an unreasonable dependence on the mirror
 - if dirty (including condensation), distort or restrict the view
 - can be damaged by vandals or by accident
- Other concerns include;
- misleading at night when reflecting headlights

- affected by glare from sunlight
- confusing for non-local motorists
- difficult to site satisfactorily (particularly at crossroads)

5.3 It is understood that the prescribed sign that features in the 2016 revision of the TSRGD applies to existing (authorised) traffic mirrors. For new traffic sign applications the DfT publish several guidance documents titled Traffic Signs Manuals (TSM). Since a traffic mirror has never been a prescribed sign the current TSM does not provide guidance on the use of mirrors. Consequently the DfT advise that local highway authorities should continue with a policy of not allowing new mirrors but that they should produce their own policy that can be promoted locally.

5.4 We are informed by the DfT that the use of traffic mirrors within the urban context is unusual. This is because there are many other traffic management measures that should be applied before consideration is given to making an application for a mirror.

6.0 ALTERATION TO EXISTING POLICY

6.1 In view of the DfT position it is recommended that Reading Borough Council as the local highway authority shall not allow the use of traffic mirrors. However, the reasoning in not allowing traffic mirrors should be clear, therefore the current policy (Traffic Management, Policy and Standards; section 1.5.3) shall be altered, reflecting the previous DfT position as explained in 5.2 of this report, to include the following:

Where Reading Borough Council as local highway authority receives a request to install a mirror on the highway the follow policy shall apply:

The council will not allow new mirrors to be put on the highway. This is because experience nationally shows that rather than improving safety, a mirror could increase safety risks, which include;

- *reduce the ability to judge an oncoming vehicle's speed*
- *create an unreasonable dependence on the mirror*
- *if dirty (including condensation), distort or restrict the view*
- *be damaged by vandals or by accident*
- *reflect light and interfere with a driver's vision*
 - *particularly misleading at night when reflecting headlights*
 - *affected by glare from sunlight*
- *confusing for non-local motorists*
- *difficult to site satisfactorily (particularly at crossroads)*

Exceptions

Where there is severely restricted visibility and an identifiable injury accident record that has not been successfully resolved by all other traffic management measures, a mirror may be considered for a trial period of 12 months. Permanent authorisation will be based on evidence of how effective the mirror has been as a road safety measure through the measurable reduction of injury accidents.

In addition to the above

- *Road mirrors at private entrances will not be put up on the public highway.*
- *Any mirror placed within the public highway without our approval will be removed.*
- *All such mirrors must be on private land with the approval of the landowner.*

6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 6.1 This proposal supports the aims and objectives of the Local Transport Plan and local traffic management policies and standards in ensuring the safety of the public highway is maintained.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 The Traffic Management, Policy and Standards (A Policy Document) is available on request.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 This policy meets the duties placed upon us as local highway authority by the Highways Act.

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, victimization 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 The Council has carried out a equality impact assessment scoping exercise, and considers that this policy change does not have a direct impact on any groups with protected characteristics.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 None.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None.