

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT PLANNING & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	15 March 2021		
TITLE:	VEHICLE CROSSINGS - SHORT FRONTAGE LICENCE TRIAL OUTCOME & POLICY		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT BOROUGH WIDE
SERVICE:	TRANSPORTATION AND STREETCARE	WARDS:	BOROUGH WIDE
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council has an approved Vehicle Crossing Policy which sets out the criteria that applicants must meet to ensure that a vehicle crossing can be safely installed. As part of that process applicants need to have a minimum 4.8m depth within their property, perpendicular to the property boundary, to ensure that they can park their vehicle fully within their property and not overhang the public highway footway/ pavement and cause an obstruction on the highway.
- 1.2 Due to the urban nature of many of Reading's roads, achieving this minimum depth of 4.8m is not always possible and the Council allowed a limited trial where this minimum depth was not possible under licence agreement. The outcome of the trial was delayed due to the Covid 19 pandemic.
- 1.3 This report is to provide the Committee with the outcome of the 'Short Frontage Agreement' trial for vehicle crossings where the minimum 4.8m depth requirement cannot be met.
- 1.4 This report also seeks approval to adopt the updated 'Short Frontage Agreement' following the successful trial.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the outcome of the 'Short Frontage Agreement' trial.
- 2.2 That the Committee approves the updated 'Short Frontage Agreement' Policy, as set out in paragraph 5 and Appendix 1.
- 2.3 That the Committee gives delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Environmental & Commercial Services in consultation with the Lead

Councillor for Strategic Environment Planning and Transport, the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services and the Assistant Director of Finance to enter into the 'Short Frontage Agreement' licences, as described in this report.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 To secure the most effective use of resources in the delivery of high quality, best value public service.
- 3.2 To make travel more secure, safe and comfortable for all users of the public highway.
- 3.3 To provide a public highway network as safe as reasonably practical having due regard to financial constraints and statutory duties.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 A report was brought to this Committee on 21st November 2018 seeking authority to carry out a 'Short Frontage Agreement' trial.
- 4.2 The current vehicle crossing policy criteria includes for a minimum 4.8m depth of property frontage to ensure that the vehicle can park perpendicular to the boundary and not overhang the public highway.
- 4.3 There are numerous historic examples across the Borough where this minimum depth could not be achieved, but a vehicle crossing installed. The assumption is that they were approved at a time when the obstruction of the public highway was not included in the approval process and presumably met the Council's criteria in place at that time.
- 4.4 The Council has routinely refused vehicle crossing applications where the minimum 4.8m depth criteria could not be met since the adoption of the Vehicle Crossing Policy on 4th April 2017. Some residents have carried out their own research and have challenged the Council to review the criteria, based on what other Local Highway Authorities have been allowing under licence agreement.
- 4.5 It should also be noted that the Council recognises the growing shift to the use of electric vehicles will result in the need to charge electric vehicles on the public highway. The adoption of flexible licence criteria will allow residents to take their cars off road to charge then where previously they were unable due to the minimum depth criteria.
- 4.6 The Council has carried out a benchmarking exercise and found that several London Borough Councils employ the use of 'Short Frontage Agreements', which reduces the minimum depth criteria to either 4.3m or 4.1m depth. The Agreement contains conditions to ensure that the vehicle is contained within the property frontage and an actionable outcome should the property break the conditions and overhang / obstruct the public highway.

- 4.7 The Council carried out a limited trial of 'Short Frontage Agreements' for vehicle crossings where the minimum 4.8m depth requirement cannot be met. The minimum property frontage depth was reduced to 4.3m with a requirement for the applicant to prove that they can safely park a vehicle wholly within their property and not overhang the public highway causing an obstruction.
- 4.8 Failure to comply will result in the vehicle crossing being removed and all costs recovered from the property owner. The Vehicle Crossing Policy is shown in Appendix 2.
- 4.9 All applications for vehicle crossings will be reviewed and only approved if they comply with the Council's Vehicle Crossing Policy, including those applications on classified (main roads) and within conservation areas which will continue to require planning consent before a Section 184 Vehicle Crossing Licence is issued.

Outcome of the 'Short Frontage' Trial

- 4.10 There has been 2 applications for 'Short Frontage' licences agreed with the Council, both of which have been installed during the trial period and are proving to be managed by the residents in a successful manner.

5. THE PROPOSAL

- 5.1 As part of the trial process the Council has received further requests to reduce the minimum depth further. The original decision on reducing the minimum depth to 4.3m was a taken to reduce the risk of a vehicle overhanging onto the public highway. Further benchmarking has shown that some Councils have now agreed a 3.8m minimum depth within a 'Short Frontage Agreement'.
- 5.2 It is proposed to amend the 'Short Frontage' Agreement criteria as follows:
- 5.2.1 Retain the standard vehicle crossing minimum depth of 4.8 m, as per the current Vehicle Crossing Policy.
- 5.2.2 To enter into a 'Short Frontage' Agreement where applications can only achieve a minimum 4.3m minimum depth, as per the completed 'Short Frontage' trial.
- 5.2.3 To include additional criteria for those applications that can only achieve a minimum depth of 4.1m as an absolute minimum, but subject to the following additional conditions:
- There is a minimum 1.8m footway width adjacent the proposed vehicle crossing is available.
 - The proposed vehicle crossing is on an unclassified residential road, (not on a high traffic volume main 'classified' road e.g. A4 Bath Road).
 - That the pedestrian footfall passing the proposed vehicle crossing is at an acceptably low level.
 - That there is sufficient visibility on exiting the property.

5.2.4 The cost of the licence will be borne by the applicant with current fees for Legal Services to produce the licence being up to a maximum of £ 500, with the Highway fee for the application set to match the vehicle crossing application fee, which is currently £ 75.

6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

6.1 The Short Frontage Policy will contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan 2018-21 objectives of:

- Securing the economic success of Reading
- Keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe
- Ensuring the Council is fit for the future

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

7.1 The Short Frontage Policy and criteria/standards will be made available on the Council's website once approved by the Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee.

7.2 The Council's Highway Policies are available on the Council's website.

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 Short Frontage Policy is part of procedures to maintain the Council's existing public highway network. There is no overall change to service delivery at this time only how those service requirements are met. Should any future updates/amendments be required, which result in service delivery changes, an equality impact assessment will be carried out.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There is no fundamental change in the use of the public highway, however, all new vehicle crossings constructed on the public highway will include a carbon reduction and environmental element aimed at reducing the impact on the environment by the works. The intent is to reduce the amount of carbon used to produce the material by using lower temperature products, use of recycled

materials and reducing the uncontrolled waste in the environment to reduce pollution of the natural environment.

- 9.2 Applicants will be encouraged to construct their hard standing areas within their own property in suitable products taking due regard to carbon emission reductions and surface water run off control.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Council, as Highway Authority, has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to carry out highway maintenance and maintain highway structures.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The proposed Short Frontage Agreement licences will be fully funded by the applicant, as part of their vehicle crossing application.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 Highway Maintenance Policies
- 12.2 Strategic Environment Planning & Transport Committee 21st November 2018