

**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD
SERVICES**

TO:	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE		
DATE:	15 SEPTEMBER 2021	AGENDA ITEM:	6
TITLE:	READING STATION SOUTH-EAST TAXI RANKING: PROPOSALS FOR STATUTORY CONSULTATION		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	TONY PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	TRANSPORT	WARDS:	ABBEY
LEAD OFFICERS:	JAMES PENMAN	TEL:	01189 372202
JOB TITLES:	ASSISTANT NETWORK MANAGER	E-MAIL:	Network.Management@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report recommends that officers be authorised to undertake a statutory consultation on a proposal that maintains taxi ranking at the Reading Railway Station ‘horseshoe’ rank, while considering the needs of the Station Hill development construction and the competition for kerb-space and access within Reading Town Centre.
- 1.2 This recommendation follows meetings with Reading Buses and Reading Taxi Association, the exploration of potential options and further detail about the impacting elements of the Station Hill development during construction and following phase completions.
- 1.2 Appendix 1 - A plan to show the proposal for statutory consultation.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Sub-Committee notes the report.
- 2.2 That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to undertake statutory consultations for the restrictions proposed in Appendix 1, in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.
- 2.3 That subject to no objections received, the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make the Traffic Regulation Order and scheme delivery planning will commence.
- 2.4 That any objection(s) received following the statutory advertisement be reported to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee.
- 2.5 That no public inquiry be held into the proposals.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

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

4. THE PROPOSAL

Current Position

- 4.1 There is a 4-space taxi rank to the south-east of Reading Railway Station, referred to as the 'horseshoe' rank. This has been fed from taxi feeder ranking along Garrard Street, which exits onto Station Road and has a sightline to the horseshoe rank. Taxis have accessed Garrard Street from the south-west interchange using an indicator device that has linked to the bays on Garrard Street and indicates when there is capacity available.
- 4.2 The Station Hill area redevelopment has been gaining momentum, with works recently commencing to demolish Garrard Street car park and commence construction work on the site that spans both sides of Garrard Street.

This work has already impacted on the taxi feeder rank and Pay & Display bays that utilise kerbside space along the street. Temporary restrictions have been put in place to facilitate the continuation of this taxi feeder facility in the short-term, but it is expected that there will be a safety and operational need to restrict stopping/parking along the street for a number of years during the various phases of major construction work.

- 4.3 In consideration of the major construction operations and the initial expectation that Garrard Street would ultimately become a closed street, officers have been considering viable options to accommodate taxi feeder ranking elsewhere in the vicinity of the station horseshoe rank, to ensure its viable operability.

There is limited kerbside space available in the town centre and a significant number of town centre stakeholders that are important to accommodate, such as taxi and bus operators, space for businesses to load and unload goods and disabled parking spaces. With Reading railway station being one of the busiest outside of London, these challenges are amplified in the immediate vicinity.

Although officers have been meeting informally with Reading Taxi Association, Reading Buses, it has been challenging to find an agreeable compromise that maintains service provision at the rank.

- 4.4 Officers have considered requests to allow certain vehicle types to continue along Greyfriars Road in a southbound direction and turn left onto Friar Street. While this left turn could currently be made viable for a car-sized vehicle, it would not be safely achievable by larger vehicles and also becomes unviable with the introduction of cycle lanes along Greyfriars Road - a future deliverable required of the Station Hill developers. This also removes the possibility of introducing, or retaining on-street parking along the street.

It was also considered that there would be difficulty introducing sufficient feeder ranking on Friar Street, that this longer route would increase vehicle emissions,

make it challenging to keep the horseshoe rank sufficiently fed and have the undesirable effect of introducing more vehicle traffic into this busy part of the town centre.

- 4.5 It has since been confirmed that Garrard Street will remain as adopted public Highway and can, therefore, remain open following the completion of the Station Hill redevelopment.

Options Proposed

- 4.6 It is recommended that, in seeking viable taxi feeder options for the horseshoe rank, that Garrard Street remains a linking route with the existing enforced 'gate' restriction at the Station Road link to remain in place.

It is recommended that the existing small taxi feeder bay at the eastern end of Garrard Street be retained, as this will enable a small number of taxis to wait and feed the horseshoe rank with line-of-sight, as they currently do so.

Due to the long-term development works referred in Section 4.2, it is recommended that parking restrictions are placed along the remainder of Garrard Street to prevent parking. This will inevitably become a requirement of Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders in any case, but the 'permanent' implementation will provide a clear and consistent approach.

These parking restrictions will also replace the Pay & Display bay to the east of Merchants Place, which was initially proposed as the temporary taxi feeder rank facility. This has generated local noise complaints and is not considered a suitable location for such a facility.

Appendix 1 provides a drawing to show these recommended restrictions.

- 4.7 While this recommendation reduces the feeder ranking capacity on Garrard Street, this will inevitably be the case through temporary restrictions that will need to be in place throughout the development works. Once the development is complete, consideration can be made for on-street restrictions that accommodate the needs of the area.

This recommended proposal is viable and creates a very short route for taxis to travel, when compared to the options explored in Section 4.4. The indicator device for the taxi feed from the south-west interchange will be placed on the short taxi ranking bay that will be retained at the east end of Garrard Street.

- 4.8 Officers recommend that the Sub-Committee approves the undertaking of the statutory consultation that is necessary to promote alterations to these on-street restrictions.

Should any objections be received, Officers will report these to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee (expected to be November 2021) so that they may be considered before a decision is made on whether the proposals should be implemented.

Other Options Considered

- 4.9 As referred in Section 4.4, officers reviewed options to utilise a loop along Greyfriars Road, Friar Street and Station Road, but this was considered unviable.

Officers also explored options of providing feeder ranking in Valpy Street that linked onto Blagrave Street and fed the horseshoe rank. This was considered unviable as it would require taxis to feed the horseshoe rank from a separate feeder point to the south-west interchange without providing sufficient capacity with which to do so, and would also have necessitated unacceptable impact to bus/parking/loading facilities in order to accommodate.

- 4.10 Officers have investigated the possibility of extending the size of the horseshoe rank. With Garrard Street remaining open and the requirement to retain its exit onto Station Road, there was no scope to move existing facilities in a way that would enable an extension of the bay on the western side of the rank. Vehicle tracking analysis has demonstrated that only a negligible extension of the bay could be possible on the east side, which would not be sufficient to accommodate another vehicle without considerable overhang and, therefore, obstruction to the turning area in front/keep clear area to the rear.

It is considered that the recommendation of Section 4.6 is currently the only viable option for retaining the horseshoe rank.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 This proposal contributes to the Council's Corporate Plan Themes, as set out below:

Healthy environment

The recommended proposal will retain the quick and efficient access to the horseshoe rank that taxis currently have. It avoids extended journeys through signalised junctions and along other town centre streets where there are higher traffic volumes and footfall and avoids multiple feeder-ranks, which were risks of the other options explored. As a result, this proposal is not expected to increase vehicle emissions.

The proposal does not impact on bus infrastructure and bus stop availability, so will not have a detrimental impact to these services. This retains the attractiveness of using these mass transit services and removes the potential risks of people switching to less sustainable transport modes that other options may have introduced.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 6.2 A climate impact assessment has been conducted for the recommendations of this report. The assessment shows a net minor negative impact.

Advertised notices need to be weatherproof and are, therefore, not typically recyclable. The implementation of the alterations will require some lining removal and new lining installation, which will necessitate some burning of fossil fuels for the specialist contractor machinery.

However, the proposal doesn't require significant alteration to the existing restrictions, does not require additional signing to be manufactured and is over a relatively small area. These minor negative impacts will be over a short period of

time will be partially mitigated through the anticipated reduction of Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders required to facilitate the Station Hill redevelopment phases - these would require the posting and maintenance.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 A 21-day public statutory consultation will be undertaken and all objections considered by the Sub-Committee before a decision will be made on whether to implement the proposed changes.
- 7.2 The consultation will be advertised with local notices on street and in the local printed newspaper, hosted on the Council's website (the 'Consultation Hub').
- 7.3 The Council has been meeting with Reading Buses and Reading Taxi Association, who will be directly contacted by officers to make them aware of the consultation commencing.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, 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 It is not considered that an Equality Impact Assessment is relevant as the proposals are not deemed to be discriminatory to persons with protected characteristics, nor do they significantly vary existing operations. A statutory consultation will be conducted, providing an opportunity for objections/support/concerns to be considered prior to a decision being made on whether to implement the proposals.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The creation of a new Traffic Regulation Order requires advertisement and consultation, under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.

This report seeks agreement for the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services to undertake this process.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The following information is based on agreement to the recommended actions of this report.

10.1 Revenue Implications

	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Employee costs	NIL	NIL	NIL
Other running costs			
Capital financings costs			
Expenditure	NIL	NIL	NIL
Income from:			
Fees and charges	NIL	NIL	NIL
Grant funding			
Other income			
Total Income	NIL	NIL	NIL
Net Cost(+)/saving (-)	NIL	NIL	NIL

While the above reflects the expected revenue implications for the implementation of the recommended proposal, it should be noted that there is potential for an increase in revenue through the civil enforcement of the restrictions that are delivered. This, however, cannot be guaranteed and the expectation upon delivery of the proposal is of compliance with the restrictions.

Staff costs will be capitalised.

10.2 Capital Implications

Capital Programme reference from budget book: page line	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Proposed Capital Expenditure	£10	NIL	NIL
Funded by Grant (specify) Section 106 (specify) Other services Capital Receipts/Borrowing	Capital integrated transport block (ITB) grant funding	N/A	N/A
Total Funding	£10	NIL	NIL

This proposed expenditure covers staff time, advertising of the Traffic Regulation Order (proposed and sealed), delivery of the lining alterations and implementation of the indicator device system.

10.3 Value for Money (VFM)

Officers consider that the recommendation of this report is the only viable option for retaining the horseshoe rank. As per Section 4, other options have been explored, which would have required more substantial (and costly) alterations within the town centre.

The recommended proposal requires relatively little change and will result in a scheme that requires little ongoing maintenance, beyond lining refreshment and the replacement of battery-powered sensors over time (anticipated 5-year life).

10.4 Risk Assessment

There are no foreseen financial risks associated with the recommendation of this report. The sensors have been sourced and the lining will be provided by existing suppliers.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None.