

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE		
DATE:	11 NOVEMBER 2021	AGENDA ITEM:	
TITLE:	READING STATION SOUTH-EAST TAXI RANKING: RESULTS OF STATUTORY CONSULTATION		
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#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report recommends that officers be authorised to seal the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) and proceed to implement the waiting restriction changes reported to the September 2021 Sub-Committee meeting. The Sub-Committee is asked to consider the responses received following the statutory consultation that was conducted between 14 October and 4 November 2021, when making their decision.
- 1.2 The proposal 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. It follows meetings with Reading Buses and Reading Taxi Association, the exploration of potential alternative options and the receipt of further detail about the impacting elements of the Station Hill development during construction.
- 1.3 Appendix 1 - Anonymised feedback received during the statutory consultation.  
Appendix 2 - Plan to show the proposed alterations.

#### 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 make (seal) the Traffic Regulation Order, as advertised, and that the resultant notice be advertised in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.
- 2.3 That the scheme be implemented with the renewed bay indicator device as per Item 4.6.

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| <p>2.4 That respondents to the statutory consultation be informed of the decision of the Sub-Committee, following publication of the agreed meeting minutes.</p> <p>2.5 That no public inquiry be held into the proposals.</p> |
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### 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 In seeking viable taxi feeder options for the horseshoe rank during the redevelopment of the Station Hill site, Officers recommended the placement of parking restrictions along Garrard Street that were reported to the Sub-Committee in September 2021. Appendix 2 provides the plan for these proposed restrictions.

It was proposed that Garrard Street remains a linking route to Station Road and that the existing bus 'gate' restriction remains in place and continues to be camera-enforced to prevent abuse by non-authorised vehicles.

Due to the long-term development works in the Station Hill area, it was recommended that parking restrictions be placed along Garrard Street to prevent parking, with the exception of the existing taxi feeder rank at the eastern end of the street - this provides a line-of-sight to the Horseshoe rank.

- 4.3 The recommendations were agreed for statutory consultation, which was conducted between 14<sup>th</sup> October and 4<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

Officers confirmed to the Sub-Committee that a new indicator system was ready for installation, once a scheme is agreed for delivery. The device detects when there is availability at the feeder rank and triggers an illuminated indicator at the main feeder location (the South-West Interchange).

Mr Rashid, Chairman of Reading Taxi Association, who spoke on this report item also asked whether a CCTV system could be installed so that drivers could see when there was availability at the bay and an additional camera for enforcement purposes at the rank.

- 4.4 The Sub-Committee is asked to consider the feedback received during the consultation in Appendix 1 and decide whether or not the proposed restrictions should be implemented.

## Options Proposed

- 4.5 Officers recommend that the Sub-Committee agrees to the TRO being sealed and the proposal being implemented as advertised.

While this recommendation reduces the theoretic feeder ranking capacity on Garrard Street, this will inevitably continue to be the case through temporary restrictions that will need to be implemented throughout the Station Hill area development works. Once the development is complete, consideration can be made for on-street restrictions that accommodate the needs of the area and the results of the development may make alternative options more desirable. This proposal is, therefore, intended as a 'temporary' measure.

- 4.6 In response to Mr Rashid's request for CCTV, Officers can firstly report that the bus gate restriction that restricts unauthorised vehicles from exiting Garrard Street onto Station Road is already enforced by CCTV and will continue to be so. Enforcement of the taxi rank waiting restriction is not currently permissible by CCTV, but will continue to be enforced by foot patrol as part of the Council's Parking Civil Enforcement contract.

Indicative costings for installing a CCTV and display screen system for taxi drivers at the South-West Interchange, wishing to view the proposed taxi feeder rank on Garrard Street, are £25k plus the cost of the electrical connections (potentially doubling this cost) and ongoing electrical usage and maintenance costs. This compares with the renewed low-power indicator devices that have been purchased for £5k already, providing a newer version of the system that the taxi trade has been using for many years and using the existing electrical supplies.

The request for CCTV is not budgeted and is not considered to be appropriate nor representing value for money for the temporary nature of this scheme. There are also public safety and privacy concerns regarding the public display of live CCTV footage at an alternative nearby location. It is not recommended that this proposal be pursued.

## Other Options Considered

- 4.7 The report to September 2021's Sub-Committee outlined the options that had been considered and dismissed during engagement with Reading Taxi Association and other town centre stakeholders.

It is considered that the recommendation of this report 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 has been undertaken and all objections reported to the Sub-Committee for consideration before a decision is made on whether to implement the proposed changes.

7.2 The consultation was advertised with local notices on street and in the local printed newspaper, hosted on the Council's website (the 'Consultation Hub') and Reading Taxi Association were notified directly.

## **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 has been

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 Order will be made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and advertised 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.

- 9.2 Following the making of this Order, the public must be afforded a period of six weeks to raise any legal challenge, prior to any alterations to the restrictions within being proposed through statutory consultation.

## 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			
<b>Expenditure</b>	NIL	NIL	NIL
Income from:			
Fees and charges	NIL	NIL	NIL
Grant funding			
Other income			
<b>Total Income</b>	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
	£10	NIL	NIL

Proposed Capital Expenditure			
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 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 carriageway 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 Reading Station South-East Taxi Ranking: Proposals for Statutory Consultation (Traffic Management Sub-Committee, September 2021).