

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

TO:	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE		
DATE:	11 NOVEMBER 2021	AGENDA ITEM:	
TITLE:	RED ROUTE WEST: NORCOT ROAD & OXFORD ROAD BAYS		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	TONY PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Additional bay-marked restrictions were installed on the West Reading Red Route on Oxford Road (loading bay) and Norcot Road (parking bay) in 2018 and 2019, following initial feedback that was received about additional requirements that needed to be accommodated. Statutory consultations were carried out on these restrictions and the results were reported to the Sub-Committee in July 2020.
- 1.2 A decision was made to implement the restrictions, subject to a further review of the Norcot Road parking bays. As all proposals were consulted in a single Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), a decision needs to be taken on all elements before the TRO can be sealed/made.
- 1.3 Officers have reviewed the bays on Norcot Road and recommend that the Sub-Committee agree to keep the bays, with one minor adjustment to be made to the bay outside property no. 273 Norcot Road so that the bay does not partially cover the driveway. This will enable the sealing of the TRO and retention of the marked restrictions.
- 1.4 Appendix 1 shows the current location of the bays on Norcot Road, with the minor adjustment recommended.

Appendix 2 provides the feedback originally received to the statutory consultation on the proposal to implement the additional parking bays on Norcot Road.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Sub-Committee notes the report.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">2.2 That the Sub-Committee agrees to either retain the bays on Norcot Road, adjust them as recommended, or remove them.2.3 That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to undertake the necessary legislative and regulatory processes to seal the resultant Traffic Regulation Order.2.4 That no public inquiry be held into the proposals. |
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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.
- 3.2 The Red Route also compliments the Council's Local Transport Plan, Climate Emergency Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy by supporting public transport and removing barriers to the greater use of sustainable, healthy transport options.

4. BACKGROUND AND PROPOSALS

Current Position

- 4.1 Following the introduction of the experimental red route on the west side of Reading in the summer of 2018 a request for an additional loading bay on Oxford Road was received from a local business and installed later in October 2018.

A petition from residents of 275 - 291 Norcot Road was submitted to the Traffic Management Sub-Committee in January 2019. Residents had been parking on the Highway verge and tarmacked areas and were receiving Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) for doing so with the Red Route being in place. To assist residents and provide additional on-street parking, additional parking bays were installed on Norcot Road in July 2019.

The Traffic Management Sub-Committee agreed to make the west Reading red route order permanent and officers recommended that these additional bays be progressed through statutory consultation, for completeness of process. Officers were approved to carry out the statutory consultation for these bays at the Sub-Committee meeting in September 2019.

- 4.2 The statutory consultation took place between 5th - 26th March 2020. The objections reported to the Sub-Committee in July 2020 included 1 objection, 1 support and 2 comments on the Norcot Road bays (see Appendix 2). There were concerns raised about the safety of the bays, their impact on driveways and residents stated they would prefer to park on the verge as they had done in the past before the Red Route was installed.

The Sub-Committee agreed that the Oxford Road loading bay be implemented, but that the decision on regarding the proposals for Norcot Road be deferred pending further review.

- 4.3 Both the Oxford Road and Norcot Road bays were consulted as part of a single TRO, which is common practice for providing best value for money in terms of officer resource and the necessary advertising costs. As such, the TRO cannot be sealed until a decision is taken on all elements.
- 4.4 Officers have since received further comments from Norcot Road residents. There have been reports of vehicles being damaged by traffic passing the bays, and some difficulties caused when accessing private driveways.

Access protection markings are in place to deter vehicles parking over driveway access points in the bays by further highlighting the dropped footway crossings. Although the reports of vehicle damage are regretful, it is not considered that the bays inhibit visibility for motorists using Norcot Road.

Options Proposed

- 4.5 Officers recommend that the Sub-Committee agrees to the implementation of an amended proposal for the Norcot Road bays, which can result in the sealing of the TRO. The proposed amendment reduces the bay near to Lawrence Road, as per Appendix 1, overcoming a commented concern that was raised during the consultation, regarding driveway access.
- 4.6 The Red Route restriction applies to the extent of the adopted Highway, which includes footways and verges. The bays have been installed to accommodate additional resident parking on the road, which is an area that is constructed to accommodate this use, over that provided by residents' private off-street parking areas.

Parking on footways and verges causes damage as they are not constructed to support vehicle use. This could extend to damage risks for utility services and other street furniture that is installed and can cause mud to be dragged across footways, which is a hazard to pedestrians. Parking on footways can cause accessibility issues and act as a deterrent to greater adoption of active and sustainable transport modes. The placement of Red Route parking bays on the outside of the bend and the clearance of former verge/footway parking on the inside of the bend improve motorist visibility at this location.

'Selective non-enforcement' is not an option as this can lead to claims of discrimination and could undermine enforcement of the Red Route and other parking restrictions across the borough.

It is, therefore, not recommended to facilitate any verge/footway parking at this location, as has been previously requested.

Other Options Considered

- 4.7 A second option is to retain the bays as presented on street and to seal the TRO as it was advertised. While officers remain satisfied with the proposal as advertised, the primary option (Item 4.5) provides an opportunity to overcome a concern that has been raised, so remains the officer recommendation.

- 4.8 A third option is to seal the TRO without the inclusion of the Norcot Road bays and that these bays must subsequently be removed - this will revert to the underlying restriction (No Stopping Mon - Sat, 7am - 7pm).

This option will require nearby residents to park their vehicles wholly on their own private land, or at an alternative location that is not contravening parking restrictions, when the Red Route No Stopping restrictions apply. It is for this reason that this option is not recommended by officers.

- 4.9 The proximity of the Lawrence Road junction, bus stop and traffic island prevent the bays from being moved. There is also a need to ensure the bays are close to the properties where they are needed.
- 4.10 The Sub-Committee is asked to note that the resultant TRO must be sealed before March 2022, otherwise the TRO process will expire and a new consultation would need to be conducted for these facilities on Oxford Road and Norcot Road. The Council would need to remove the Oxford Road and Norcot Road bays in the interim.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

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

Healthy environment

Reading's first Red Route was implemented in three sections primarily to improve the consistency of journey times for the Number 17 Reading Buses service and help to further enhance the appeal of using of public transport services in Reading. The restrictions enable improved enforcement against the ad-hoc stopping activities that were being conducted along its route, in contravention of the prior restrictions.

The benefits of the Red Route to bus services were also expected to benefit cyclists along the route, who would have a clearer route and would see greater containment of on-street parking (stopping) to permitted bays only. Furthermore, the Red Route provides greater enforceability against footway encroachment by parked/stopped vehicles, through the enhanced enforcement opportunities that the restriction brings. These improvements were intended to remove barriers that may have existed toward the greater adoption of active and healthy transport modes.

- 5.2 This proposal contributes to the TEAM Reading Values, as set out below:

Together - The addition of the bays noted in this report were proposed following feedback that the Council received to the original Red Route restrictions.

Efficiency - The recommendation of the report retains the existing infrastructure (with minor adjustment to lining) that would otherwise require costly removal.

Ambitious - The Red Route supports the Council's goal of making Reading a carbon neutral town by 2030.

Make a Difference - The Red Route makes a positive difference across transport modes.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers) and an Environmental Impact Assessment has been conducted on the recommended option.
- 6.2 The recommendation of this report is to proceed with the primary option - a minor amendment to a bay marking. This will require a contractor visit and some lining adjustment that will have a very small negative impact in terms of fossil fuel use during implementation (powering the bespoke contractor vehicle, heating the paint, removal of the existing markings).

Option 2 proposes no change, so the impact is expected to be nil.

Option 3 would require more significant contractor work to remove larger areas of road markings and remove signs, leading to wastage of materials and greater use of fossil fuels during implementation of the change.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 The project to create Reading's first Red Route scheme commenced with a 6-week informal public consultation, during which time all properties fronting the route received letters and information, alongside press releases, and local drop-in sessions were held to seek feedback on the initial concept proposals and to inform the detail of the scheme.
- 7.2 The Council created a page on its website dedicated to Red Route information, which has contained the detailed plans and legal Notices associated with each section of the Red Route, while it was experimental. Press releases preceded the implementation of each section. It should be noted, however, that Red Route restrictions have been a relatively long-standing feature within the Highway Code.

The Council continues to operate an application process where dispensation requests can be considered for one-off events where there is no alternative nearby stopping facility. There have been relatively few applications across the entire Red Route and they have been typically accommodating house-moves, setting up scaffolding for property maintenance and other similar short-term activities. This process has allowed officers to work with residents/property owners to accommodate specific activities at no cost to them, while also enabling timing and location conditions to be added in order to minimise the impact of the activity on traffic flow.

- 7.3 Any Statutory consultation will be carried out in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, advertised on street, in the local printed newspapers and on the Council's website (the 'Consultation Hub').
- 7.4 Traffic Management Sub-Committee is a public meeting. The agendas, reports, meeting minutes and recordings of the meetings are available to view from the Council's website.

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. The recommendation of this report is to fundamentally retain the on-street parking bays, which would not alter the existing arrangements that have been in place since 2019.

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, namely to retain the existing bays on Norcot Road with a minor alteration. A cost will be involved in the advertising of the order, when it is sealed.

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 Grant funding Other income	NIL	NIL	NIL
Total Income	NIL	NIL	NIL
Net Cost(+)/saving (-)	NIL	NIL	NIL

10.2 Capital Implications

Capital Programme reference from budget book: page line	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Proposed Capital Expenditure	1.5	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	1.5	NIL	NIL

10.3 Value for Money (VFM)

The scheme has been investigated and designed by officers of Reading Borough Council and all civil engineering work will be undertaken by the Council's in-house delivery team. The exceptions will be specialisms that currently lay outside of the Council's resources, such as lining implementation and sign creation. However, these will be appointed through existing contracts and using contractors that conduct these works to a scale that provides value for money through their chargeable rates.

The recommendation of this report will necessitate sealing the resultant TRO, which will attract costs for advertisement, and to the minor adjustment of on-street lining, which represent minimal works at a low cost.

Sub-Committee agreement to Option 2 would provide best value for money initially, as it will only require advertisement of the resultant TRO and no physical changes on-street. However, this could impact on revenue through the Council having to address complaints that could have been partially overcome by introducing the amendments proposed in the primary recommendation.

10.4 Risk Assessment

There are no foreseen financial risks associated with the recommendation of this report.

Should the Sub-Committee agree to Option 3, or should the Sub-Committee not reach a decision in time for the resultant TRO to be sealed, this would attract greater costs to the Council. The Norcot Road bays and, potentially, the Oxford Road bay would need to be removed, inclusive of all signing and lining. Any amendments/replacement would necessitate restarting the statutory consultation process.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Results of Statutory Consultation: Red Route Bays on Oxford Road and Norcot Road (Traffic Management Sub-Committee, July 2020).
- 11.2 Red Route - Route 17 (Traffic Management Sub-Committee, September 2019).
- 11.3 Red Route - Route 17 (Traffic Management Sub-Committee, March 2019)
- 11.4 Red Route - Route 17 (Traffic Management Sub-Committee, September 2017)
- 11.5 Red Route - Route 17 (Traffic Management Sub-Committee, March 2017)
- 11.6 Proposed Service Offers and Budget Proposals 2016-2019 to Narrow the Budget Gap (Policy Committee, July 2015)