

Traffic Management Sub-Committee

06 March 2025



Reading
Borough Council
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Title	Digital Parking Permits Traffic Regulation Order Amendment – Results of Statutory Consultation
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Elizabeth Robertson – Assistant Parking Services Manager
Lead Councillor	Cllr John Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy & Transport
Corporate priority	Not applicable, but still requires a decision
Recommendations	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note the content of this report.2. Consider the consultation responses in Appendix 1 and agree to make and seal the Traffic Regulation Order.3. Agree that the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make and seal the draft Traffic Regulation Order.4. Agree that respondents to the statutory consultation be informed of the decisions of the Sub-Committee accordingly, following publication of the agreed minutes of the meeting.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. At the Traffic Management Sub-Committee in September 2023, it was agreed to roll out the digital parking permits borough wide to include all permit types from 01 November 2023 (except for visitor parking permits).
- 1.2. This report informs the Sub-Committee of comments and objections resulting from the statutory consultation to amend existing Traffic Regulation Orders to add additional articles by allowing new applications, renewals, replacements and the issue of digital parking permits through the online portal.
- 1.3. Physical permits are being retained for anyone unable to access the online portal.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The provision of parking restrictions and associated criteria is specified within existing Traffic Management Policies and Standards.
- 2.2. The introduction of Digital Parking Permits complements the Council's Local Transport Plan, Climate Emergency Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy by addressing local parking issues that can impact on traffic flow and perceived safety and accessibility.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. Parking Permits are now provided as both digital and physical permits.

- 3.2. The Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) advertised amends the existing TROs by adding additional articles within them that allows for new applications, renewals, replacements and the issue of digital parking permits through the online portal.
- 3.3. This allows permits to be instantly processed, renewed and issued at any time.
- 3.4. Residents benefit where paperless permits are issued instantly without delay or break in cover due to delivery of a physical permit.
- 3.5. The Order amends all current TROs by stating that there will be no requirement to display a physical parking permit in the vehicles, if a digital parking permit has been issued.
- 3.6. The Council will still offer physical permits to resident who are unable to access digital services. If a physical permit has been issued, the requirement to display the permit in the vehicle remains unchanged.
- 3.7. There are some consequential climate benefits from reduced printing and postage and shared experiences of digital permits suggest resident and visitor satisfaction is far greater when compared to a paper-based permit.

Current Position

- 3.8. Approval was given by the Sub-Committee in September 2023 to implement digital permits and update the Traffic Regulation Orders. The report is available [here](#).
- 3.9. The statutory consultation process is a consultation with the public and other statutory consultees to create and seal a Traffic Regulation Order. Traffic Regulation Orders underlie on-street restrictions and allow them to be implemented and enforced.
- 3.10. The statutory consultation process allows the Council to propose or amend a new Traffic Regulation Order and in doing so, it must seek comments so that these may be considered as part of the decision on whether the restrictions be finally implemented. The proposed Order advertised that historic Traffic Regulations Orders be amended to include digital permits. Now that the consultation responses have been received, the Committee must consider these and a decision must be made whether to finalise the Order.

Options Proposed

- 3.11. Analysis of the consultation feedback
- 3.12. The Council received 5 responses during the statutory consultation, 4 supported the application and 1 objected.
- 3.13. The points below highlight the main reasons for objections and officer proposals to mitigate the issues:
 - More vehicles will park without a valid permit.
 - The Civil Enforcement Officers can quickly identify vehicles parking without a permit. The use of a “spotter” vehicle travels around Reading on intelligence led patrols, collecting data of where vehicles are parking without a permit.
 - This data is sent in real time to the CEO on a “swarm” bike that can attend and deal with vehicles parking in contravention.
 - The more digital the provision the better. Vehicles that are parked with a physical Visitor permit would not be issued a PCN.
 - Thames Valley Police have no objections but raised the exemption to having to display a permit.
 - There are already exemptions within the main TROs that cover Police, Ambulance and Fire Brigade vehicles.

- 3.14. The points below summarise the support for the TRO
- Good Idea as long as physical permits are retained as well
 - Great Idea – saves money
 - Enforcement is good with technology that can detect vehicles
- 3.15. The Sub-committee is asked to consider the feedback received in Appendix 1 and make the following decisions:
- Agree with objections – all digital permits are replaced with physical permits in due course or;
 - Overrule objections – the Traffic Regulation Order is made and sealed and digital permits can continue;

Other Options Considered

- 3.16. None at this time.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1. The Council's new Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:
- Healthy Environment
 - Thriving Communities
 - Inclusive Economy
- 4.2. These themes are underpinned by "Our Foundations" explaining the ways we work at the Council:
- People first
 - Digital transformation
 - Building self-reliance
 - Getting the best value
 - Collaborating with others
- 4.3. Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the [Council's website](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.
- 4.4. This proposal contributes to the Council's Corporate Plan Themes as set out below:

Healthy Environment

Parking restrictions can assist in preventing obstructive, hazardous or other nuisance parking. In some situations, inconsiderate parking can pose safety risks or result in difficulties for residents and businesses. Many parking issues can create delays or accessibility obstructions for users of the network such as pedestrians, cyclists, domestic vehicles, delivery vehicles, emergency services and public transport.

Parking Enforcement of the restriction can help to reduce some of these parking issues. They can lead to more efficient traffic flow, clearer footways, reductions in Highway safety risks and more efficient parking management/containment. These can lead to lower vehicle emissions, the removal of barriers toward the greater use of sustainable and healthy transport modes and the greater appeal for local communities to consider Play Street initiatives. The proposals will contribute to the Council's goal of making the town carbon neutral by 2030

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 5.2. A climate impact assessment has been completed which suggests that Digital Parking Permits have a net low positive impact on the Climate Impact Assessment Carbon Emissions: there will be a minimal amount of energy used in creating the notices in the form of energy used to print and computer usage. Therefore, a provisional rating of Net Low Positive has been awarded for Energy Use. Use of Transport has been awarded Low Negative: where possible Officers will use council owned electric vehicles for the installation of notices, if applicable. It is not believed that this project will have any effect on creating Heatwaves/Drought/Flooding/High winds or storms, so the rating of Nil has been achieved.
- 5.3. The council will always try to use local contractors/suppliers, hence the reason for giving a Nil rating for Disruption to Supply Chains. Overall, however, the short-lived and minimal negative impact for the implementation of the pilot is expected to be more than mitigated by the long-term benefits of replacing paper permits with a digital process specifically if the pilot is a success and can be rolled out to all zones for all of our parking permit types.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. A statutory consultation was carried out from 23 January 2025 to 12 February 2025. Notices of intention were advertised in the local printed newspaper. The Police are a statutory consultee and were directly notified. The consultation was also hosted on the Council's website (the 'Consultation Hub'), where details are available.
- 6.2. 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.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. 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.
- 7.2. It is not considered that an Equality Impact Assessment is relevant as the proposals are not anticipated to have a differential impact on people with protected characteristics. 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.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1. Procedural Requirements and Regulatory Duties – Section 9 refers to the regulatory requirements for sealing and advertising Traffic Regulation Orders.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (Act) provides the legal basis for making Traffic Regulation Orders. The Council has carried out the statutory consultation required for this order in accordance with the procedures set out in the Local Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. In doing so, it has also considered

its Network Management Duty under the Traffic Management Act 2004 and its Section 122 duty under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

- 9.2. The statutory consultation has resulted in a response that in line with the Council's constitution must be considered by the Committee. The Committee must then determine whether the Order should be made and sealed with or without modifications.
- 9.3. Any person who wishes to question the validity of the order or of any of its provisions on the grounds that it or they are not within the powers conferred by the Act, or that any requirement of the Act or of any instrument made under the Act has not been complied with, that person may, within 6 weeks from the date on which the order is made, apply for the purpose to the High Court.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. The cost of digitalised scheme is part of the IT software and Enforcement Contracts. It is expected that a reduced cost of printing would be realised by implementing digital.
- 10.2. Financial Risk Assessment:

The long term roll out of digital permits could reduce income as a result of more flexible visitors permits.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1. Digital Permits have been rolled out across the Borough from 01 November 2023, all permits are now digital.
- 11.2. Visitor permits are still physical except for the Digital Visitor permit trial being undertaken in permit zone 02R

12. Background Papers

- 12.1. There are none.

Appendices

1. Feedback received to the statutory consultation for the Digital Permit TRO amendment.