

Highway Cabinet Member Decision Session

Highway Cabinet Member Decision Session held 20 March 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Leigh Bramall (Cabinet Member for Business, Skills and Development)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: John Bann, Head of Transport, Traffic and Parking Services
Tony Lawery, Senior Transport Planner
Dick Skelton, Senior Transport Planner

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1. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

1.1 No items were identified where it was proposed to exclude the public and press.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS SESSION

3.1 The minutes of the Session held on 13 February 2014 were approved as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

4.1 New Petitions

The Cabinet Member noted the receipt of a petition, containing 157 signatures, requesting parking alterations on Warwick Crescent and that this would be considered at a future date.

4.2 Outstanding Petitions List

The Cabinet Member received and noted a report of The Executive Director, Place submitted a report setting out the position on outstanding petitions that were being investigated.

5. GREENHILL MAIN ROAD/GREENHILL AVENUE - PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF TRAFFIC SIGNALS

5.1 The Executive Director, Place submitted a report outlining the outcome of two public consultation exercises relating to the proposed introduction of traffic signals at the junction of Greenhill Main Road and Greenhill Avenue and officers responses to the representations received and reporting the receipt of objections to a Traffic Regulation Order to prohibit the left turn into Greenhill Avenue from Greenhill Main Road.

5.2 Mr David Witely, a local resident attended the meeting to make representations

to the Cabinet Member. He commented that he had lived in the area for 40 years so believed he had a good understanding of traffic movements in the area. He recognised the need to improve traffic flow around the Meadowhead roundabout as this had been a long standing issue. He acknowledged that the traffic signals would help to improve the traffic flow. However, preventing the left turn from Greenhill Main Road into Greenhill Avenue would add an extra 200 vehicles to the roundabout which would make the traffic problems worse.

- 5.3 The number of responses, including the petition, against the proposed ban on the left turn was statistically significant and represented an overall negative view of the proposals from local residents.
- 5.4 The impact of the proposals on traffic in the surrounding streets would be considerable. Traffic travelling north would seek every opportunity to avoid the Meadowhead roundabout and this would impact on roads such as Bocking Lane. The proposals would also intensify parking around the shops in the Greenhill area.
- 5.5 Mr Witely did not believe that the claims that the proposals were motivated by safety were credible as safety in the area from vehicles using the streets as a rat run had been a long standing issue which had not been resolved.
- 5.6 In conclusion, he requested that the recommendation for the introduction of a no left turn from Greenhill Avenue to Greenhill Main Road not be approved and further consultation be held with local residents on adjustments to traffic management in the area.
- 5.7 Lesley Fox, a local resident, also attended the Session to make representations to the Cabinet Member. She acknowledged that recent amendments to the Meadowhead roundabout had improved congestion. However, the proposal preventing a left turn from Greenhill Main Road into Greenhill Avenue was a major cause of concern. The additional vehicle movements would aggravate parking and congestion in narrow village roads which were already being used as a rat run. She requested that the ban on the left turn not be progressed and full consultation be held on traffic issues in the Greenhill consultation area by 2015.
- 5.8 Julia Holmes, a resident of School Lane, commented that School Lane was a narrow village road with a lack of off street parking with congestion at busy times. Students attending the College already walked between parked cars and in the middle of the road and the speed of vehicles was putting them in danger. Vehicles were already trying to find ways of avoiding the Meadowhead roundabout and the proposals would make the situation worse. She also requested that a full public consultation take place to address the problems in the area.
- 5.9 John Bann, Head of Transport, Traffic and Parking Services welcomed the residents support for the introduction of the traffic signals. He commented that research had shown that vehicles would do a number of things in response to the banning of the left turn.

- 5.10 Tony Lawery, Senior Transport Planner, commented that the rationale behind the banning of the left turn was that, without this, the crossing would not be able to be put in the same place which would impact on the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. The crossing could be moved down but people would not divert their journey as a result.
- 5.11 John Bann added that if there was a safety problem in a particular area this would be addressed. However, officers worked on accident statistics rather than perception. Some enforcement work had taken place at the local school.
- 5.12 David Witely commented that the justification for the work on Meadowhead roundabout was to improve the traffic flow of vehicles in the area. Officers were now saying that other road users should be accommodated who weren't the primary focus of the works in the first place. In response, John Bann commented that with any scheme officers always tried to take the needs of other users into account.
- 5.13 Councillor Leigh Bramall accepted that the primary issue was the impact of the proposals on the village. He asked what the level of car movements in the area was? Tony Lawery reported that a survey had been undertaken in February 2014. 6 vehicles had moved into the area in the morning peak time and 65 vehicles had gone out to Greenhill Main Road using the 3 main routes.
- 5.14 John Bann emphasised that the proposed crossing facility was very important to improve safety in the area and officers wished to proceed with it.
- 5.15 Councillor Leigh Bramall accepted the need to proceed with the crossing but recognised residents' concerns. He requested that further traffic surveys be undertaken to clarify the position and mitigation measures be explored to alleviate traffic problems in the area.
- 5.16 **RESOLVED:** That the Cabinet Member for Business, Skills and Development:-
- (a) defers the implementation of a scheme to introduce traffic signals at the junction of Greenhill Main Road/Greenhill Avenue and associated works in the vicinity, as shown on drawing np. 1513BB2-SD-LT107-TRO-B in the report pending the outcome of further surveys and assessment of alternative works;
 - (b) requests that further consultation be undertaken with local residents in respect of the further surveys and potential impact of the proposal for a no left turn from Greenhill Main Road into Greenhill Avenue; and
 - (c) requests that the objectors be informed accordingly.
- 5.17 **Reasons for Decision**
- 5.17.1 The proposals were not progressed at this stage, subject to further traffic surveys and assessment of alternative works in the area, in response to

residents' objections that traffic problems in the area would be made worse as a result.

5.18 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

5.18.1 To approve the scheme as recommended.

6. OBJECTIONS TO THE PROVISIONS OF TAXI RANKS AT ROCKINGHAM STREET, CARVER STREET AND BURGESS STREET

6.1 The Executive Director, Place submitted a report outlining objections to the introduction of three experimental taxi ranks in the City Centre and setting out the Council's response.

6.2 Mr Buston, a local resident, attended the meeting to make representations to the Cabinet Member. He referred to the petition in Appendix D1 which made reference to the Interim Planning Guidance on Night Time Uses and asked whether this was also relevant to Cambridge Court? In response, Dick Skelton, Senior Transport Planner, reported that the guidance did not actually apply to Rockingham Street as the petitioners had suggested and did not believe that it applied to Cambridge Court and Carver Street.

6.3 Mr Buston further commented that extending the taxi rank to 17 spaces on Carver Street would exacerbate the problems of noise in the area and was not an appropriate location for the taxi rank. There was a rank with 10 spaces nearby away from Cambridge Court. He supported the rank on Burgess Street but asked why the Carver Street rank could not be located on Leopold Street or Cambridge Street which were more appropriate locations.

6.4 Dick Skelton stated that he did not discount that the complaints about noise were valid complaints. The issue was whether the situation had been made worse by the changes to the taxi ranks. Research had shown that if taxi ranks were made more remote people did not use them to a great extent and drivers then picked people up directly from the streets. He believed that since the ranks had been put in less people were walking about and were more inclined to get into a taxi and this helped to reduce noise from people walking about and shouting.

6.5 The Police in particular were very much in favour of the Carver Street taxi rank and had helped to reduce road safety issues caused by inconsiderate parking.

6.6 Councillor Leigh Bramall acknowledged that this was a difficult issue and the ranks had been introduced to try and improve the situation in the area. He agreed with Mr Skelton that with a dedicated taxi rank people were more inclined to get in a taxi rather than stay in the area and potentially causing noise. Carver Street had 4 nighttime venues on a short narrow street so noise, unfortunately, would be an issue but it was hoped that the taxi ranks would help to reduce the problem.

6.7 Councillor Bramall further reported there had been a cap on the number of taxis some years ago but this had been lifted and it would be difficult to reduce the

numbers back down at the present time. Unfortunately, the Council did not possess the enforcement capacity to deal with the noise problems all of the time.

6.8 **RESOLVED:** That:-

- (a) the experimental Traffic Regulation Order be made permanent for the three taxi ranks in accordance with the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984; and
- (b) the objectors be informed accordingly.

6.9 **Reasons for Decision**

6.9.1 The benefits of retaining these ranks outweigh the objections received, most of which had not been sustained.

6.9.2 The Rockingham Street Rank

The lead petitioner was contacted after the rank had been in place for several months and views sought as to the practical impact of the rank. No response was received.

The individual objectors were also contacted and two responded. Their views about the rank were the complete opposite of one another, with one saying the situation was worse than anticipated and couldn't sleep due to the noise from the taxis and the other stating that the noise, since the rank was introduced, was no worse than before.

6.9.3 The Carver Street Rank

The lead petitioner was contacted after the rank had been in place for several months and views sought as to the practical impact of the rank. No response was received.

6.9.4 The Burgess Street Rank

A few months after the rank was put in place, the person who objected was contacted and views sought as to the practical impact of the rank. No response was received.

6.10 **Alternatives Considered and Rejected**

6.10.1 The locations of the ranks were agreed with taxi representatives, club owners and the Police.

6.10.2 No alternative options were considered. Past experience of placing ranks remote from venues has simply not worked. Most people simply walk towards their next destination and flag a taxi down on the way. The drivers waiting in the remote rank lose trade and the rank becomes little used. Picking customers up at the venue may also help to reduce anti-social behaviour and noise remote from the venue, as there are fewer people walking the streets looking for a cab.

