

Division(s): St Clement's and Cowley Marsh; Iffley Fields and St Mary's

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT – 12 JANUARY 2017

OXFORD: A420 THE PLAIN ROUNDABOUT: PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO LOADING BAY RESTRICTIONS ON EAST SIDE OF ROUNDABOUT

Report by Deputy Director of Environment & Economy (Commercial)

Introduction

1. This report presents an objection received in the course of a statutory consultation on a proposal to amend the operative hours of the 30 minute Vehicle Loading Bay on the eastern side of The Plain roundabout.

Background

2. In 2014 proposals were advertised and approved to amend the provision for the use of the laybys at The Plain roundabout in conjunction with the major improvement scheme for the roundabout. The approved restrictions for the layby on the east side of the roundabout permitted its use for loading between 7.30am and 6.30pm, with the layby available as a taxi rank outside these hours.
3. Subsequent to the completion of the improvement works in 2015, it came to light that the hours of operation of the loading bay allowed for in the new traffic regulation order did not align with an Oxford City Council order made in 1984 which established the taxi rank between 8pm and 6am.
4. It was therefore considered appropriate to consult on an amendment to the traffic regulation order to permit loading between 6am to 8pm, with its use as a taxi rank outside these hours then aligning it with the Oxford City Council order.

Consultation

5. A formal consultation on the proposal was carried out between 13 May and 10 June 2016. This comprised a public notice being published in the Oxford Time, street notices being provided at the layby, an email sent to statutory consultees, including Thames Valley Police, the Fire and ambulance services, and local consultees. Letters were also sent to adjacent premises, and a dedicated page was also added to the County's online consultation portal to allow people to view and respond to the proposals.
6. Three responses were received (as detailed in Annex 1), comprising an objection from the City of Oxford Licenced Taxi Association (COLTA), and

responses from Oxford City Council and Thames Valley Police expressing no objection, but with Oxford City Council querying the current absence of marking of the taxi rank within the layby.

7. The objection from COLTA was on the grounds that the proposed change would put an unnecessary burden on taxi drivers who used the rank conveniently and effectively at its current timings, which they considered were appropriate; in particular the current starting time of the rank (6.30pm) suited a considerable number of customers from St Clements, Cowley Road or Iffley Road travelling into the city centre and elsewhere in the city. Reverting the starting time to 8pm would prove problematic for customers. For these reasons COLTA believe that to extend the hours of the loading bay as advertised would have a detrimental effect on their trade and that the passengers they wished to serve would suffer unnecessarily. They requested therefore that no change was made to the current provision.

Response to objection

8. While COLTA's comments are noted they seem, however, to have misunderstood that the proposal does not alter the approved hours of operation of the rank (8pm – 6am daily) which have been in place since 1984. As the taxi licencing authority it would be for Oxford City Council to promote any changes to the timing of the rank – should that happen we would seek to amend the timing of the loading bay to match.
9. Furthermore, in the light of recent decisions regarding the use of Queen Street by taxis etc, it may well be appropriate for there to be a review of rank provision across the City Centre. For the present it is considered appropriate to bring the operational hours of the loading bay into line with the taxi rank, thus avoiding any anomaly which could prejudice enforcement and potentially make the bay unusable by taxis.

How the Project supports LTP4 Objectives

10. The proposals would help facilitate safe and efficient movement of traffic at this busy location.

Financial and Staff Implications (including Revenue)

11. The proposal has been undertaken by County Environment & Economy officers as part of their normal duties.

RECOMMENDATION

12. **The Cabinet Member for the Environment is RECOMMENDED to approve implementation of proposals as advertised.**

CMDE5

CHRIS McCARTHY
(Interim) Deputy Director of Environment & Economy (Commercial)

Background papers: Plan of proposed restrictions
 Consultation responses

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January 2017

Summary of consultation responses

RESPONDENT	SUMMARISED COMMENTS
Thames Valley Police	No objection.
Oxford City Council	As the proposal doesn't affect the times of the rank there shouldn't be a problem; a query was raised on the current marking of the rank within the bay but this is unrelated to the proposal.
COLTA	<p>COLTA objects to this proposal. For the times to be extended for this loading bay either side, morning and most certainly evening will put unnecessary burden on drivers who use this area conveniently and effectively at its current timings which are appropriate in terms of parking there and waiting for passengers. Certainly in the evenings, 18:30 and beyond is a busy time and people require taxis quite often walking from Saint Clements, Cowley Road or even Iffley Road, upon seeing a taxi parked on this bay, will more than likely hire it and head into the City Centre. To have the time extended to 20:00 will no doubt prove problematic for customers wanting a taxi at a busy time but unable to find a taxi because of the restriction time pushed back.</p> <p>Another thing to note is that drivers when heading home or indeed just starting a shift use this bay at its current unrestricted timings and pick up jobs to bring them into the city centre or even towards their home if they're finishing. For these reasons we believe that to extend the restrictive times of this bay morning and evening will have a detrimental effect on our trade and the passengers whom we wish to serve will suffer unnecessarily. We therefore request that the current times should be adhered to.</p>