

Title of Report:	Newbury Town Centre Traffic Management Issues	Item 10
Report to be considered by:	Executive	
Date of Meeting:	18 February 2010	
Forward Plan Ref:	EX2000	

Purpose of Report:

For the Executive to consider the various traffic management issues that need to be resolved in Newbury town centre prior to commencement of trading at the new Parkway development.

Recommended Action:

That the Executive resolves to approve the recommendations set out below:

1. To convert Parkway Bridge to a two-way shuttle working traffic signal controlled route for buses, taxis and cycles only with advanced cycle stop lines, a bus/taxi/cycle lane, and licence plate recognition cameras.
2. To authorise officers to make capital bids for funding for the two-way shuttle traffic signals and for the licence plate recognition cameras during the financial year 2010/11 in order that they can be installed and operational in time for the opening of the Parkway development at Easter 2011.
3. To remove buses from all areas of the pedestrianisation zone (ie Bartholomew Street north, Mansion House Street, Market Place and Northbrook Street).
4. To permanently remove the taxi rank from Market Place and to prevent taxis from driving through Market Place during pedestrianisation hours.
5. To convert the feeder taxi rank in Wharf Street to a formal rank where customers would be able to get a taxi.
6. To continue to operate the taxi rank in Wharf Street in the current direction and only to reverse the direction if this proves to be operationally problematic.

7. To introduce a loading ban in Wharf Street between its junction with Wharf Road and the site of the rising bollards to coincide with the operational time of the pedestrianisation zone.

8. To change the pedestrianisation zone end time from 6.00pm to 5.00 pm.

9. To retain the current traffic management arrangements for West Street and to keep the West Street Junction with Northbrook Street open to traffic.

10. To authorise officers to obtain feedback from the various interest groups and organisations listed in 8.1 and to put the details of the proposed traffic management changes on the Council's Web Site when finalised as indicated in 8.2.

11. Subject to there being no significant objections at the feedback stage, in which case these will be reported back to the Executive, to authorise officers to carry out the statutory advertisements and consultations as necessary on revised Traffic Regulation Orders as set out in 8.3.

12. Subject to there being no objections to the statutory advertisements and consultations on revised Traffic Regulation Orders that cannot be overcome, to authorise officers to carry out all work necessary to implement all of the proposed changes in time for the opening of the Parkway development.

13. To authorise officers to refer any objections on revised Traffic Regulation Orders that cannot be overcome to the Portfolio Member for Highways, Transport (Operational) and ICT for consideration by means of an Individual Decision report.

Reason for decision to be taken:

1. To introduce traffic management measures within the town centre to complement the Parkway development.

2. To enhance the town centre shopping experience for visitors.

3. To cater for the changes in traffic patterns that will result from the Parkway development.

Other options considered:

None.

Key background documentation:

Report to the Newbury Town Centre Task Group dated 23 July 2008.

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Plan Priority:

- CPP3 – Reduce West Berkshire’s carbon footprint** – to reduce CO₂ emissions in West Berkshire and contribute to waste management, green travel, transportation and energy efficiency

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Plan Theme(s):

- CPT1 - Better Roads and Transport**
 CPT2 - Thriving Town Centres
 CPT5 - Cleaner and Greener
 CPT7 - Safer and Stronger Communities
 CPT10 - Promoting Independence
 CPT11 - Protecting Vulnerable People
 CPT12 - Including Everyone

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Plan Priorities and Themes by:

- (a) rationalising the movement of traffic in Newbury town centre;
 (b) balancing the servicing needs of the business community, the accessibility needs of disabled persons, and the access and egress needs of properties within the pedestrianisation zone;
 (c) creating a virtually traffic free environment for pedestrians within the pedestrianised zone during the day.

Portfolio Member Details

Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor David Betts - Tel (0118) 942 2485
E-mail Address:	dbetts@westberks.gov.uk
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	24 December 2009

Contact Officer Details

Name:	Mark Cole
Job Title:	Traffic Services Manager
Tel. No.:	01635 519210
E-mail Address:	mcole@westberks.gov.uk

Implications

- Policy:** The recommendations within this report accord with existing Council policies and procedures.
- Financial:** Capital bids will need to be made in 2010/11 for the two-way shuttle working traffic signals (£50,000) and for the licence plate recognition cameras (£40,000). Statutory advertisement and consultation for revised Traffic Regulation Orders will be funded from existing budgets.
- Personnel:** There are no personnel issues arising from this report.

- Legal/Procurement:** Legal Services will process the necessary Traffic Regulation Orders. Procurement processes will be used for provision of the two-way shuttle traffic signals and for the licence plate recognition cameras.
- Property:** There are no property issues arising from this report.
- Risk Management:** A potential risk management issue has been identified in relation to pedestrians who may initially be at higher risk of an accident if the pedestrianisation end time is brought forward from 6.00pm to 5.00pm. However it is considered that this risk can be adequately managed. Paragraphs 6.3.1, 6.3.2 and 6.7 of this report cover this aspect in more detail.
- Equalities Impact Assessment:** Removal of the taxi rank in Market Place is proposed and this may impact persons with mobility difficulties. Conversion of the feeder rank in Wharf Street to a formal rank where customers can get a taxi is proposed to mitigate this impact. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be produced before any proposals are carried out.

NOTE: The section below does not need to be completed if your report will not progress beyond Corporate or Management Board.

Is this item subject to call-in?	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report seeks a resolution of a number of key issues concerning the management of traffic in Newbury town centre as we move towards the opening of the new Parkway development in Spring 2011. All of these issues are interrelated and need to be considered holistically in order for the correct decisions to be taken.
- 1.2 In particular the issues that need to be resolved are:
- Vehicles that should be permitted to use Park Way Bridge
 - Removal of buses from the pedestrianisation zone
 - Removal of taxis from Market Place
 - Changes to the operational use of the current taxi feeder rank and introduction of a loading ban in Wharf Street
 - Changes to pedestrianisation zone timings
 - Permanent traffic management solution for West Street.

2. Proposals

- 2.1 Park Way Bridge should be converted to a two-way shuttle working traffic signal controlled route for buses, taxis and cycles only with advanced cycle stop lines and a bus/taxi/cycle lane. The method of enforcement of the bus/cycle/taxi lane should be by means of licence plate recognition cameras.
- 2.2 Buses should be removed from all areas of the pedestrianisation zone (ie Bartholomew Street north, Mansion House Street, Market Place and Northbrook Street).
- 2.3 The taxi rank should be permanently removed from Market Place and taxis prevented from driving though Market Place during pedestrianisation hours.
- 2.4 The feeder taxi rank in Wharf Street should be converted to a formal rank where customers would be able to get a taxi and a loading ban introduced.
- 2.5 The pedestrianisation zone end time should be changed from 6.00pm to 5.00pm.
- 2.6 The current traffic management arrangements for West Street and its junction with Northbrook Street should be retained as they are at present.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 It is considered that if these proposals are all implemented, they will provide the best options for the movement of traffic through Newbury town centre, for the servicing needs of the business community, for the pick up and drop off needs of disabled persons, for the access and egress needs of occupiers of premises situated within the pedestrianisation zone, and for pedestrians who would enjoy a virtually traffic free environment during the day within the pedestrianisation zone.

Executive Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 There are a number of traffic management issues that need to be resolved in the period between now and the completion of the Parkway redevelopment. Some of these issues relate to existing problems that have been causing ongoing concerns and some of them are issues that have been considered by the Newbury Town Centre Task Group during the last two years.
- 1.2 The issues that need to be resolved and that are discussed in this report are as follows:
- Vehicles that should be permitted to use Park Way Bridge
 - Removal of buses from the pedestrianisation zone
 - Removal of taxis from Market Place
 - Changes to the operational use of the current taxi feeder rank and introduction of a loading ban in Wharf Street
 - Changes to pedestrianisation zone timings
 - Permanent traffic management solution for West Street.
- 1.3 The Newbury Town Centre Task Group has discussed all of these issues and recommends that they should be formally taken forward to implementation.

2. Vehicles that should be permitted to use Park Way Bridge

- 2.1 The "Vision for Newbury 2025" identified Park Way as a public transport corridor for Newbury. This is linked to the attractiveness of the new Parkway development that will have key anchor stores at this location and excellent links through to Northbrook Street. A decision needs to be made on what we mean by Park Way being a public transport corridor. Park Way will have to continue to provide access to the Camp Hopson car park and for service vehicles but Park Way Bridge can be either a two way route for buses only or for buses and taxis only. A formal Council decision needs to be made so that the statutory processes can begin to make the necessary changes to Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to define the vehicles that will be permitted to use Park Way Bridge.
- 2.2 The advantage of not allowing taxis to use the bridge is that it is less likely that other cars will continue to use the route. Experience from other towns is that when drivers see taxis using a route they use it as well. This can also happen when the route is for buses only but is less of a problem. However when traffic signal two-way shuttle working operation for buses only was employed over Park Way Bridge during town centre road works in the past there was significant abuse by other vehicles.
- 2.3 If taxis are prevented from using Park Way Bridge it is likely to be a very unpopular decision within the taxi trade. Taxis would still be able to come down Park Way from north to south and use the turning facility and small taxi rank that is being provided on the north side of the bridge if the decision is to prevent them from using the bridge. This would be very inconvenient for them however because if they were situated in the taxi rank in Wharf Street they would have to take a very long route via the A339 to get to Park Way to pick up passengers. Similarly if they picked up passengers in Park Way that had destinations to the south of the bridge they would

have a long route via the A339, which they currently don't have to take because all vehicles can use the bridge in this southbound direction.

- 2.4 If taxis are to be permitted to use Park Way Bridge there are measures that could be introduced to control the problem of other vehicles using the route as well. These are as follows:
- 2.4.1 Police enforcement – unlikely to be very effective because they do not have sufficient resources available to carry this out on a regular basis.
- 2.4.2 Introduction of a bus and taxi lane over the bridge together with licence plate recognition enforcement cameras. The Council obtained the powers to carry out this enforcement in its successful application to the Department for Transport (DfT) for decriminalised parking powers as part of the West Berkshire Clear Streets Parking Project. This means that the Council has the necessary powers to enforce this traffic offence.
- 2.5 Another decision that needs to be taken is whether or not cyclists will be permitted to use Park Way Bridge. This decision needs to be taken whether or not taxis are to be permitted to use the bridge. The advantage of permitting cyclists to use the bridge is that it supports policies to encourage more people to use this method of transport. A disadvantage is that the traffic signal settings are likely to require a longer all red clearance stage to allow for slow cyclists to get over the bridge safely when the lights have changed. However it is considered that this problem can be minimised by introducing advanced cycle stop lines. If the decision taken is to permit cyclists, then the solution in 2.4.2 above would require either a bus and cycle lane, or a bus, taxi and cycle lane.
- 2.6 It is considered that on balance Park Way Bridge should be a two-way shuttle working traffic signal controlled route for buses, taxis and cycles only with advanced cycle stop lines, a bus/taxi/cycle lane, and licence plate recognition cameras. This is therefore the recommended course of action. It is further recommended that capital bids are made for funding for the two-way shuttle working traffic signals and for the licence plate recognition cameras during the financial year 2010/11 in order that the traffic signals and cameras can be installed and operational in time for the opening of the Parkway development in Spring 2011. The estimated cost of installing the two-way shuttle traffic signals is £50,000 and for the licence plate recognition system is £40,000.
- 2.7 **Summary of recommendations**
- 2.7.1 **Park Way Bridge should be a two-way shuttle working traffic signal controlled route for buses, taxis and cycles only with advanced cycle stop lines, a bus/taxi/cycle lane, and licence plate recognition cameras.**
- 2.7.2 **Capital bids should be made for funding for the two-way shuttle working traffic signals and for the licence plate recognition cameras during the financial year 2010/11 in order that the traffic signals and cameras can be installed and operational in time for the opening of the Parkway development in Spring 2011.**

3. Removal of buses from pedestrianisation zone

- 3.1 If it is agreed that buses should use Park Way as the main public transport corridor for Newbury town centre, the opportunity arises to remove buses from the pedestrianisation zone. This has been a long held aspiration of the Newbury Town Centre Task Group and would make the environment for shoppers and visitors to the town a much more relaxed and enjoyable experience. If this opportunity were taken up the only motorised vehicles that would enter the zone during pedestrianisation hours would be emergency service vehicles, post vehicles and bullion vehicles. There are no plans to prevent cyclists from continuing to use the pedestrianisation zone. Taxis would still pass through and park in the rank in Market Place but this issue is discussed later in this report. All other through traffic would have access outside of pedestrianisation hours as would service vehicles. If buses are removed from the zone and reassigned to Park Way this would be at all times, as it would not be practical to have different bus routes at different times of the day.
- 3.2 It is recommended that buses be removed from all areas of the pedestrianisation zone (ie Bartholomew Street north, Mansion House Street, Market Place and Northbrook Street). This would have the added advantage, in addition to the environmental ones mentioned above, that buses would no longer pass through the rising bollards in Bartholomew Street north and so the bollards would remain in the up position for the majority of the time during pedestrianisation hours. The bollards would only lower when occasional emergency service, post office or bullion vehicles needed to enter the zone. This would have an immediate impact on reducing the number of incidents of vehicle strikes on these rising bollards that arise from drivers tailgating the buses. Since the bollards will be in the up position for most of the time during pedestrianisation hours drivers making mistakes and failing to read all of the advanced warning signs should not fail to see the bollards themselves and will not have their view of the bollards obscured by buses in front of them.
- 3.3 It would be possible for only Northbrook Street to become bus free and for buses to still use the route from the bus station via Market Street, Bartholomew Street north, Mansion House Street and Market Place. However it is considered that in order to make the best use of Market Place as a venue for events and as a pavement café area it would be preferable to remove buses completely from all areas of the pedestrianisation zone. Bus routes to the north would not be delayed when leaving the bus station, as the buses would turn right on leaving and proceed to either the A339 or to Park Way Bridge via Market Street, Cheap Street and Bear Lane. Delays at the Wharf Road/Bear Lane junction should also be significantly reduced because south bound through traffic would no longer be using this route. The only traffic using this junction would be to and from the car parks in Wharf Road. Buses leaving the bus station to travel to the south via Market Street and Bartholomew Street south would not be affected.
- 3.4 **Summary of recommendations**
- 3.4.1 **Buses should be removed from all areas of the pedestrianisation zone (ie Bartholomew Street north, Mansion House Street, Market Place and Northbrook Street).**

4. Removal of taxis from Market Place

4.1 In 3.3 above the merits of seeking to make best use of the environmentally enhanced Market Place for events and as a pavement café area is mentioned. It is considered that the presence of taxis in the rank in Market Place and the constant feeding of this rank by taxis entering from Wharf Street from the feeder rank via the rising bollards detracts from this aspiration. Also if buses were removed in order to give a predominantly pedestrian environment throughout the pedestrianisation zone hours, Market Place would be the only part of the zone where this would be undermined by the presence of taxis. Consequently it is recommended that the rank should be permanently removed and that taxis should be prevented from driving through Market Place during pedestrianisation hours.

4.2 There may be some opposition from groups representing people with mobility problems, or indeed from the people themselves, about the loss of a taxi drop off and pick up service in Market Place. In order to try to overcome these potential objections it is proposed that the feeder rank in Wharf Street should be converted to a formal rank where customers would be able to get a taxi. This rank is a very short distance from Market Place. This issue is discussed in further detail in section 5 below. It should also be pointed out that the rank in Market Place only holds four taxis but the rank that has been installed in Market Street, funded from the Cinema development, holds five taxis. A further rank that will hold four taxis is to be provided on the north side of Park Way Bridge as part of the Parkway development transportation works.

4.3 Summary of recommendations

4.3.1 The taxi rank should be permanently removed from Market Place and taxis should be prevented from driving through Market Place during pedestrianisation hours.

4.3.2 The feeder rank in Wharf Street should be converted to a formal rank where customers would be able to get a taxi.

5. Changes to the operational use of the current taxi feeder rank and introduction of a loading ban in Wharf Street

5.1 If the taxi rank is removed from and taxis are prevented from driving through Market Place the issue of how best to cater for taxi routes has to be addressed. As indicated above it is proposed that the feeder rank in Wharf Street should be converted to a formal rank where customers would be able to get a taxi. The Traffic Regulation Order aspects of this are easy to do but there are some operational aspects that need to be resolved in order for the rank to operate acceptably.

5.2 At present taxis feed into the rank from the east and exit to the west through the rising bollards into Market Place. If we go ahead with the proposal to prevent them from doing this they will have to leave the rank at the western end and U-turn back to Wharf Road where they will either be able to use Park Way Bridge for routes to the north or Wharf Road/Bear Lane for other routes. By permitting taxis to use the public transport route over Park Way Bridge as recommended in 2.6 there is no significant disadvantage from taking them out of Market Place from a traffic perspective. U-turning the taxis does not give rise to any significant concerns because the traffic flows on the adjacent section of Wharf Street are very light and

there is a turning head at the western end of the rank to assist this manoeuvre. This section of the road is two way in any case because of the requirement to maintain access and egress to the private car park immediately west of the turning head. Even when the bollards are in the down position outside of pedestrianisation hours the traffic flows will be fairly light if no through traffic is travelling south over Park Way Bridge because it is the public transport only route. Although not anticipated, if it proves to be problematic to operate the rank with U-turns out of it, the alternative solution would be to have taxis U-turning into the rank at its western end and exiting at its eastern end (ie reversing the direction of operation of the rank). It is therefore proposed that the rank is operated in its current direction and only reversed if this proves problematic. It may be possible to convert the feeder rank to a formal rank in advance of the other town centre traffic management proposals. However this would need careful consideration because traffic flows in Wharf Street will still be significant outside pedestrianisation hours whilst Park Way Bridge continues to have all traffic travelling over it in the southbound direction.

- 5.3 There are regular occasions when service vehicles park on the double yellow lines in Wharf Street in order that their drivers can deliver loads within the pedestrian zone by trolley or by hand. These vehicles cause obstruction and have to reverse out of Wharf Street if they are too large to use the turning head located near the rising bollards. This situation is not only considered undesirable from a road safety perspective but if allowed to continue could interfere with the u-turning movements from the taxi rank. Consequently it is proposed that a loading ban is introduced on the section of Wharf Street from its junction with Wharf Road to the site of the rising bollards to coincide with the operational time of the pedestrianisation zone. As most businesses within the pedestrianisation zone can only carry out servicing before the pedestrianisation start time or after it has ended, it is not considered unreasonable to impose this loading restriction in Wharf Street.
- 5.4 As with Bartholomew Street north the bollards would be in the up position for the majority of the time during pedestrianisation hours. Consequently with taxis prevented from using this route the risks of other vehicles tailgating them and striking the rising bollards would be substantially reduced at this location also.

5.5 **Summary of recommendations**

- 5.5.1 **The taxi rank in Wharf Street should continue to operate in the current direction and only be reversed if this proves to be operationally problematic.**
- 5.5.2 **A loading ban should be introduced in Wharf Street between its junction with Wharf Road and the site of the rising bollards to coincide with the operational time of the pedestrianisation zone.**

6. **Changes to pedestrianisation zone timings**

- 6.1 The issue of changing the timings of the pedestrianisation zone and the associated access difficulties has been the subject of much debate over the last two years. In particular it was reviewed in considerable detail at the Newbury Town Centre Task Group meeting on 23 July 2008. The pros and cons of the various possible permutations for pedestrian zone timings were covered in considerable detail in section 7 of the Newbury Town Centre Traffic Management Issues report to that meeting, identified as a background paper to this report.

- 6.2 At present there are three north to south routes available to all traffic in the am peak period (ie Northbrook Street, Park Way and A339) and two south to north routes (ie Northbrook Street and A339). In the pm peak there are two north to south routes available (ie Park Way and A339) and one south to north route (ie A339). If Park Way bridge is closed to all traffic except buses, taxis and cycles, this would reduce the available north to south routes in the am peak for other traffic to two (ie Northbrook Street and A339). There would be no change to south to north routes for other traffic because no traffic can travel north over Park Way Bridge. In the north to south direction during the pm peak the loss of Park Way Bridge for other traffic would reduce the available routes from two to just one (ie A339). In the south to north direction there would again be no change for other traffic with the single route of A339 being the only one available because Park Way Bridge is currently southbound only. Consequently if Park Way Bridge is to become a two way buses/taxis/cycles only route as recommended, it would be prudent to bring forward the end of the pedestrianisation zone time from 6.00 pm to 5.00 pm to make available replacement north to south and south to north routes in the pm peak in order to avoid unacceptable congestion.
- 6.3 The following factors need to be considered before this decision is confirmed however.
- 6.3.1 Pedestrians currently using the town centre would have become accustomed to a traffic-free area, and would not immediately be aware of the dangers of traffic if the restrictions are lifted at 5pm, and may initially be considered to be at a higher risk of accident compared with areas in which they are accustomed to expecting traffic.
- 6.3.2 A further consideration is the impact that the opening of Northbrook Street will have on the character of the town centre shopping area. There would be approximately 330 vehicles per hour as a combined total for both directions on Bridge Street, changing it substantially from a pedestrian dominated area to one for traffic between 5.00 pm and 6.00pm.
- 6.4 In 2007 the Council's traffic model consultants undertook some assessments to ascertain the impact of bringing forward the pedestrianisation end time from 6.00 pm to 5.00 pm. The key findings of this work at that time were that:
- Purely in terms of traffic flows and journey operating efficiency, the proposal to end pedestrianisation at the earlier time of 5.00pm appears to be workable with little or no adverse effects.
 - For those residing or working in the central, central-western and central-southern area, there are advantages in being able to avoid lengthy delays at the Robin Hood roundabout.
 - In almost all cases the journey time via the A339 is actually improved due to reduced traffic volumes created by other traffic diverting to the town centre routes, creating an incentive to remain on the A339. The same is also true for certain town centre movements (for example Market Street to Shaw Hill) and it is only locally based origin and destination zones that benefit from the alternative routes.

- 6.5 It is considered that the traffic patterns in Newbury have changed substantially since the decision was taken in the past to revise the pedestrianisation zone end time from 5.00 pm to 6.00pm. The peak period for pm traffic has become more spread with more workers varying their leaving times and more employers adopting flexible working arrangements. Consequently it is considered that historical problems of queues in Strawberry Hill are likely to be less acute because visitors and workers will vary their leaving times depending on traffic conditions.
- 6.6 The A339 is the main north/south route for through traffic and this should be encouraged. Recent improvements at the Robin Hood Roundabout Gyrotory have made both this junction and the A339 a more attractive route than the route through Northbrook Street for all but fairly specific local journeys. If we revert back to 5.00 pm for the pedestrianisation end time it would be necessary to monitor the situation carefully. If this change were to result queues in Strawberry Hill a possible solution to this would be to install traffic signals at the Old Bath Road/Oxford Street mini-roundabout junction and at the Old Bath Road/Strawberry Hill mini-roundabout junction at some future date.
- 6.7 With regard to the issues of initial risks to pedestrians and the changed environment between 5.00 pm and 6.00pm identified in 6.3.1 and 6.3.2 above it is considered that with sufficient advanced publicity and use of temporary signs these risks can be managed. Although there would be traffic present in the pedestrianised zone an hour earlier, the nature of the zone with its footways and carriageways at the same level, blockwork surfaces, deliberate lack of road markings, 20 mph speed limit, street furniture and trees will continue to give the impression that pedestrians are the dominant users of the zone and that drivers should exercise caution.
- 6.8 Weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of bringing forward the end of the pedestrianisation zone from 6.00 pm to 5.00 pm it is recommended that on balance the proposal is beneficial and that this should be done. This view is supported by the Newbury Town Centre Task Group. The key driver to implementing this change is getting buses and taxis out of the pedestrianisation zone which cannot be achieved until the alternative route for these vehicles is established over Park Way Bridge together with proposed new bus stops and the taxi rank in Park Way that are to be provided by the developer. Consequently it is further recommended that the change to 5.00 pm should be programmed to coincide with the opening of the new Parkway development.

6.9 **Summary of recommendations**

- 6.9.1 **The pedestrianisation zone end time should be brought forward from 6.00pm to 5.00pm.**

7. **Permanent traffic management solution for West Street**

- 7.1 Construction of the Broadway and northern end of Northbrook Street environmental enhancements commenced on 24 August 2009. The works were suspended for the Christmas / New Year shopping period and resumed on 01 February 2010. The project should be completed by early in April 2010.
- 7.2 Various consultations took place before this enhancement scheme commenced about whether or not the Broadway and Northbrook Street north of the junction with West Street should be pedestrianised to match the pedestrianisation zone to the

south. In the 23 July 2008 Newbury Town Centre Traffic Management Issues report to the Task Group it was pointed out that there would be considerable difficulties associated with pedestrianising this northern section of road because of the large number of private parking spaces accessed directly from Broadway, Northbrook Street, Albert Road and West Street. There is no obvious solution on how the private parking spaces accessed from Broadway, Northbrook Street and Albert Road could remain useable. Consequently the decision was taken that this environmental enhancement scheme would not include pedestrianisation.

- 7.3 Since the decision not to introduce pedestrianisation in Broadway and the northern end of Northbrook Street some stakeholders have suggested that consideration should be given to closing West Street at its junction with Northbrook Street. Given the private parking access problems associated with pedestrianising this northern section of Northbrook Street and Broadway discussed above, there are no benefits to be derived from closing this junction. On the contrary there are a number of problems that this would cause that are discussed below.
- 7.4 The rising bollards are located just south of the junction of West Street with Northbrook Street at the point where the pedestrianisation zone commences. Despite the extensive signing that warns drivers as they approach the pedestrianisation zone from routes north of the town significant numbers of vehicles continue to drive down Northbrook Street during pedestrianisation hours only to find that they cannot proceed further south of the rising bollards. West Street provides the escape route for these vehicles. If the junction were closed at Northbrook Street, these vehicles would have to undertake U-turns in order to exit to the north. This would be a most undesirable situation with resulting confusion for both drivers and pedestrians. The situation would be bad enough with cars making these U-turn movements but would be particularly problematic when HGV vehicles inadvertently entered from the north and had to turn around.
- 7.5 Closure of the junction of West Street where it joins Northbrook Street would require changing the one-way westbound operation of West Street to two-way operation with access from the junction with Strawberry Hill in order to maintain access to the private parking spaces and to allow servicing of the premises situated off of West Street. There are three concerns that arise from this change to two-way operation of West Street.
- 7.6 The first is that with the present one-way westbound arrangement there are four vehicle directional movements at the Strawberry Hill junction with West Street. These are north to south, south to north, east to north, and east to south. If two-way is introduced in West Street two additional movements of north to east and south to east would be introduced at the junction. The geometry of this junction is poor as it is situated on a double bend and visibility to the north is not ideal. Although this situation already exists it is considered that adding the extra north to east and south to east movements would add to the risks of accidents at the junction.
- 7.7 Secondly, the width of West Street is nominally 5 metres. Although it is possible for this width to accommodate two-way traffic it is considered that it is rather narrow for the number of vehicle movements that would occur.
- 7.8 The third concern is that there is no chance of providing a turning head at the western end of West Street. Although not many cars would need to access this end of West Street and would probably be able to turn around if they did, the situation

would be particularly difficult for larger service vehicles. These vehicles would either have to drive along West Street from the Strawberry Hill junction and reverse back when loading or unloading was complete or would have to reverse from the Strawberry Hill junction and drive out again when loading or unloading was complete. Both of these options would present unacceptable road safety risks. The McDonalds deliveries would be particularly hazardous because this would involve reversing the delivery vehicle over the whole length of West Street. There is an access to some premises on the north side of West Street approximately half way along it that vehicles might choose to use for turning but this is a private access and there would almost certainly be complaints from the occupiers if this occurred. As the Highway Authority we should not introduce a traffic management arrangement that would result in vehicles using private land for manoeuvring or turning.

7.9 In view of the fact that there are no benefits from closing West Street at its junction with Northbrook Street and that there are a number of problems that would arise if this were done, it is recommended that the current traffic management arrangements for West Street remain as they are now.

7.10 **Summary of recommendations**

7.10.1 The current traffic management arrangements for West Street should be retained as they are now and the junction of West Street with Northbrook Street should remain open.

8. **Consultation**

8.1 It is recommended that the proposed traffic management changes contained within this report should be discussed with the various interest groups and organisations that represent Newbury town centre stakeholders so that they have an opportunity to provide feedback on them. The groups and organisations that it is proposed should be contacted are:

- Newbury Town Centre Partnership
- Newbury Retail Association
- Newbury Town Council
- Newbury Town Centre Neighbourhood Action Group
- West Berkshire Disability Alliance and the Inclusive Transport Action Group
- West Berkshire Cycle Forum
- West Berkshire Taxi and Private Hire Association
- CABCO
- West Berkshire Executive Hire Association
- Newbury Buses
- Weavaway Travel
- Emergency Services
- Newbury Post Office
- Newbury Banks
- Newbury Building Societies.

8.2 It is also proposed that once finalised the details of the proposed traffic management changes should be put on the Council's Web site to inform individual stakeholders and give them an opportunity to comment on them if they wish to.

- 8.3 Ultimately the proposed traffic management changes will require statutory advertisement and consultation on revised Traffic Regulation Orders and there will therefore be further opportunities for stakeholders to formally respond at this statutory regulation stage.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 All of the options discussed in this report are interrelated and need to be considered holistically in order that the correct decisions are made about what is best for the movement of traffic through the town centre, for the servicing needs of the business community, for the pick up and drop off needs of disabled persons, for the access and egress needs for properties situated within the pedestrianisation zone, and for pedestrians who would enjoy a virtually vehicle free environment within the pedestrianised zone during the day.
- 9.2 The Executive is requested to consider the implications of the various interrelated factors that have been discussed at length in this report and the recommendations summarised at the end of each section. The detailed recommendations are set out in the Recommended Action section of this report and the Executive is invited to resolve accordingly.

Appendices

None.

Consultees

- Local Stakeholders:** To be consulted as indicated in section 8 of this report and as a part of the statutory process for revising Traffic Regulation Orders for the various changes proposed.
- Officers Consulted:** John Ashworth; Mark Edwards; Bryan Lyttle; Jenny Noble; Gabrielle Esplin, Valerie Witton, Elaine Vincent.
- Trade Union:** Not applicable.

