

Title of Report:	Newbury Town Centre Traffic Management Issues - Second Report
Report to be considered by:	Executive
Date of Meeting:	13 January 2011
Forward Plan Ref:	EX2170

Purpose of Report:

For the Executive to consider the feedback received from the various interest groups and organisations consulted on the Council's proposals for revised traffic management in the town centre and to seek authority to proceed as recommended.

Recommended Action:

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

1. To provide a new drop off and pick up facility in the Northcroft Lane car park adjacent to the Northbrook multi-storey car park and its facilities for use by Handybuses, Readibuses and other Community Transport and Taxis only.
2. To retain the existing bus stop on the east side at the northern end of Northbrook Street for use by Handybuses, Readibuses and other Community Transport.
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 convert Park Way Bridge 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.
5. To introduce additional full time taxi rank spaces on the west side at the northern end of Northbrook Street in the current bus stop.
6. To introduce part time taxi rank spaces in Bartholomew Street near Iceland at the existing bus stop operational from 5.00pm until 10.00 am.
7. To retain the existing raised platform, kassel kerbs and, if possible, the bus shelter at the

proposed taxi rank near Iceland.

8. To introduce night time only taxi rank spaces in Bartholomew Street immediately south of the Iceland bus stop operational from 10.00 pm until 6.00 am.
9. To introduce night time only taxi rank spaces in Bartholomew Street near the Dolphin Public House on the west side operational from 6.00 pm until 8.00 am.
10. To introduce a night time only taxi rank in Cheap Street outside the main post office at the bus stop operational from 12.00 midnight until 6.00 am.
11. To convert the feeder taxi rank in Wharf Street to a formal rank where customers would be able to get a taxi.
12. To carry out the engineering improvements at the Wharf Street taxi rank as indicated on drawing number 81493/WTR/001 in Appendix D to make it more accessible to wheelchair users.
13. To permanently remove the taxi rank from Market Place, to prevent taxis from driving through Market Place during pedestrianisation hours and to advise the petition organisers accordingly.
14. To introduce a ban on loading at all times in Wharf Street between its junction with Wharf Road and the point where the block paving commences immediately west of the Museum, except for a short length on the south side between Wharf Road and the turning head, where loading would be permitted outside of the operational times of the pedestrianisation zone.
15. To change the pedestrianisation zone end time from 6.00 pm to 5.00 pm.
16. To retain the current traffic management arrangements for West Street and to keep the West Street junction with Northbrook Street open to traffic.
17. To authorise officers to carry out statutory

advertisements and consultations on all of the Traffic Regulation Orders that will be necessary to introduce the proposed traffic management changes and complement the Parkway development.

- 18. Subject to there being no objections to the statutory advertisements and consultations on these 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.**
- 19. To authorise officers to refer any objections on these 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:

Options considered within the two reports to Executive.

Key background documentation:

1. Report to Executive dated 18 February 2010.
2. Report to Newbury Town Centre Task Group dated 28 September 2010.
3. Report to Newbury Town Centre Task Group dated 23 July 2008.

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

- CPT1 - Better Roads and Transport**
- CPT2 - Thriving Town Centres**

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 or people with mobility difficulties, 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 thus enhancing the town centre experience for visitors.

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:	08 November 2010

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:** All of the proposals in this report 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 with sufficient advanced publicity and use of temporary signs.
- Equalities Impact Assessment:** A Stage One EIA was released on 17 May 2010 and is attached as Appendix B. This indicated that a Stage Two EIA would be required and that this would be informed by the responses to feedback meetings with various interest groups and organisations. The Stage Two EIA, dated 11 October 2010, indicates what actions are proposed to overcome some negative effects of the proposals to certain groups of people and is attached as Appendix C to this report.

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 follows on from the first report to the Executive on 18 February 2010 and seeks to obtain final resolutions on 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 Autumn 2011. Some additional proposals have been developed to seek to address concerns raised during a feedback process with interest groups and organisations that represent Newbury stakeholders. All of these issues are interrelated and need to be considered holistically in order for the correct decisions to be taken.

1.2 The essential firm decisions that need to be resolved are:

- Removal of buses from the pedestrianisation zone;
- Vehicles that should be permitted to use Park Way Bridge;
- Changes to the operational use of the current taxi feeder rank;
- Removal of taxis from Market Place;
- 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 with enforcement by means of licence plate recognition cameras.

2.2 Buses should be removed from all areas of the pedestrianisation zone.

2.3 Additional taxi ranks as identified in this report should be provided.

2.4 The feeder taxi rank in Wharf Street should be converted to a formal rank and engineering changes identified in this report should be adopted.

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

2.6 The pedestrianisation zone end time should be changed from 6.00pm to 5.00pm.

2.7 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. Furthermore it is considered that because all of the proposals are closely interrelated, they will need to be implemented at the same time, probably around mid October 2011.

Executive Report

1. Introduction

1.1 At its meeting on 18 February the Executive considered a number of traffic management issues that need to be resolved before 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 to three years.

1.2 The Executive resolved thirteen recommendations at the meeting with regard to such matters as:

- Removal of buses from the pedestrianisation zone;
- Vehicles that should be permitted to use Park Way Bridge;
- Changes to the operational use of the current taxi feeder rank;
- Removal of taxis from Market Place;
- Introduction of a loading ban in Wharf Street;
- Changes to pedestrianisation zone timings;
- Permanent traffic management solution for West Street.

1.3 A particular resolution (recommendation 10) was that the proposed traffic management changes contained within the report should be discussed with the various interest groups and organisations that represent Newbury town centre stakeholders so that they had an opportunity to provide feedback on them. The groups and organisations that it was agreed should be contacted and who subsequently were, 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.

1.4 The report also indicated that the proposed changes to traffic management in the town centre would require statutory advertisement and consultation on revised Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) and that there would be further opportunities for stakeholders to formally respond at that stage. Authority was granted for the officers to carry out the statutory advertisements and consultations as necessary on revised TRO's. This was however subject to there being no significant objections or comments at the feedback stage with the various interest groups and organisations

listed above. There has been a considerable response from the stakeholders and consequently it is necessary for the Executive to review the feedback and make final decisions on how the Council should proceed with the town centre revisions to traffic management. Once the way forward is finally resolved the statutory advertisements and consultations on the necessary revised TRO's can commence.

2. Feedback from Interest Groups and Organisations

- 2.1 A table has been produced that contains all of the comments received from the various interest groups and organisations consulted as part of the feedback process described in 1.3 above. This table is contained in **Appendix A** and sets out in detail all of the issues raised together with officer responses. Many of the officer responses include recommendations for further proposals to help to alleviate concerns raised and to reduce negative impacts. The table was presented to the Newbury Town Centre Task Group at its meeting on 28 September 2010. The Task Group supported the further proposals contained within the table and agreed that all of the recommendations to the proposed traffic management changes contained in the first report to the Executive on 18 February 2010 should be proceeded with.
- 2.2 The specific key issues that have arisen from the feedback process are also summarised in later sections of this report together with a rationale for the proposed way forward. A Stage One Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) was published in May 2010. In this EIA it was indicated that a Stage Two EIA would be required and that the feedback process would be used to inform the Stage Two EIA. The Stage One EIA is provided in **Appendix B** and the Stage Two EIA in **Appendix C**.

3. Removal of buses from pedestrianisation zone

- 3.1 The West Berkshire Disability Alliance (WBDA) have advised that the removal of buses from the pedestrianisation zone will be welcomed by many visually impaired people who find the continued presence of buses during the times that other vehicles are not permitted intimidating and dangerous. However they are concerned that many ambulant disabled people wishing to get from Park Way to Northbrook Street and other town centre locations will encounter difficulties. The Alliance has also raised concerns about the inability of wheelchair users to access buses in many parts of the town due to lack of kassel kerbs / boarding platforms and requested the provision of a drop off / pick up point near the public toilets at the Northbrook multi-storey car park.
- 3.2 Newbury Town Centre NAG suggested that one of the car parks in West Street could be used for drop off / pick up by Handybuses, Readibuses or Taxis and other vehicles equipped for carrying disabled passengers.
- 3.3 Newbury Buses are not happy about coming out of the pedestrianisation zone but have reluctantly accepted that this is an outcome that will be necessary if the Council is to provide the relaxed town centre experience for visitors that it is seeking to create. They have indicated that they will not object when the Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) are advertised but have requested additional bus stops at the northern end of Park Way.
- 3.4 The Local Police Area Commander has indicated his support for the removal of all traffic from the pedestrianised zone during the day.

- 3.5 Newbury Retail Association has no objection to removal of buses from the pedestrianisation zone but is opposed to Park Way Bridge being limited to buses, taxis and cycles only. The Association wants all traffic to be able to continue to use the bridge southbound as it does now.
- 3.6 Newbury Town Centre Partnership supports the Council's proposals to deliver a truly pedestrianised town centre.
- 3.7 Since the first report to the Executive in February a number of existing provisions have been clarified and additional measures have been considered or developed to help alleviate the concerns regarding removal of buses from the pedestrianised zone. These are as follows:
- The new bus stops that are proposed as part of the Parkway development are located at a convenient location close to the main access point in Park Way and these will have kassel kerbs;
 - Any bus stops that remain in use if the re-routing of buses goes ahead that still require upgrading will have kassel kerbs installed as soon as possible;
 - Ramp access into the new development is to be provided in reasonably close proximity to the bus stops and also near to Park Street;
 - Additional bus stops will be provided at the northern end of Park Way;
 - Seating is being provided within the streetscape of the Parkway development;
 - If buses are removed from the pedestrianised zone it will not be possible for all traffic to continue to use Park Way Bridge southbound as this would cause extensive congestion;
 - A drop off / pick up facility is proposed in Northcroft Lane car park at the junction with Pembroke Road adjacent to Northbrook multi-storey car park and its facilities, which is only slightly further from the location requested by the WBDA that could not be accommodated but closer than West Street to the town centre, the location suggested by Newbury Town Centre NAG. This facility would be available for use by Handybuses, Readibuses and other Community Transport and Taxis;
 - It is proposed that the existing southbound bus stop on the east side at the northern end of Northbrook Street should be retained for use by Handybuses, Readibuses and other Community Transport.
- 3.8 It is considered that based on the feedback received and the additional measures now proposed, there is no reason to move away from the original decision that the Executive made in February 2010 to remove buses from all areas of the pedestrianisation zone and it is recommended that this should go ahead.
- 3.9 **Summary of recommendations**
- 3.9.1 **A new drop off / pick up facility should be provided in Northcroft Lane car park adjacent to Northbrook multi-storey car park and its facilities for use by Handybuses, Readibuses, and other Accessible Community Buses and Taxis only.**

3.9.2 To retain the existing bus stop on the east side at the northern end of Northbrook Street for use by Handybuses, Readibuses, and other Accessible Community Buses.

3.9.3 Buses should be removed from all areas of the pedestrianisation zone (ie Bartholomew Street north, Mansion House Street, Market Place and Northbrook Street).

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

4.1 The Ambulance Service has indicated that it has no objections to any of the proposals providing that it retains access for all of its vehicles and they can use Park Way Bridge for emergency responses.

4.2 Revised Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) will need to be put in place to support all of the changes that are proposed for the town centre. These TRO's will permit all emergency service vehicles to use Park Way Bridge in both directions during emergency responses.

4.3 Newbury Buses has a concern regarding buses trying to pass each other in Wharf Road and with buses turning into Bear Lane. They are not convinced of the benefits of using Park Way Bridge and have suggested that buses from the north will terminate at Parkway and from the south terminate at the bus station. They say that having no cross town service would be significant and that it would not be beneficial to disrupt services. They are however keen to develop bus services in the area (eg a bus link to and from the railway station).

4.4 It is very common for buses to have to negotiate residential estates that are narrow, have tight bends and parked vehicles. Wharf Road has some bends but is not too narrow and there will be no parked vehicles to obstruct the route. It is not considered that turning movements at the junction with Bear Lane will be any more difficult than many other tight turns that buses would have to make.

4.5 It is considered that Park Way Bridge offers the best alternative for buses if they are removed from the pedestrianisation zone. It may be that Newbury buses will operate some services along the A339 but buses from the north will not be able to terminate at Parkway because they will not be able to turn round. They would have to drive over the bridge to turn round in the coach park and so it would be more sensible to continue south to other destinations or the bus station. The whole issue of cross town services will have to be discussed between WBC Transport Services officers and Newbury Buses staff if the decision is to go ahead with the bus proposals for the town. With the widespread changes that are coming to Newbury it is inevitable that there will be some disruption to bus services but again WBC Transport Services officers will work with bus operators to minimise this.

4.6 Newbury Town Council raised concerns regarding the volume of traffic that would be transferred to the A339 and regarding possible congestion in Wharf Street as a result of the Council's proposals.

4.7 It is known from experience that even when traffic queues back up on the A339, it still feeds through the traffic lights at the Sainsbury's roundabout reasonably quickly. There are often times when drivers use the route through Park Way and over the bridge when it is congested and sit in queues when the A339 is moving

freely. Since the Parkway project has been under construction it is evident that less traffic is using the Park Way route and the A339 has coped well. In addition the proposal to bring the end of pedestrianisation time forward to 5.00 pm will provide Northbrook Street as another peak time route. Taking all of these factors into consideration, it is considered that these concerns have been addressed.

- 4.8 There is no reason why there should be congestion in Wharf Street if the proposals are adopted. At present outside pedestrianisation hours traffic from all directions and from the Wharf car parks can use this route if required. With the proposed measures the only traffic using Wharf Street will be taxis, cycles, traffic from the Bear Lane direction or cars from the car parks that wish to use this route. There is no logical reason why traffic should divert from Bear Lane through Wharf Street because it will arrive back at the same point at the southern end of Market Place as it arrives at if it continues straight along Bear Lane. Consequently it is extremely unlikely that there will be any congestion in Wharf Street.
- 4.9 The Roads Policing team of Thames Valley Police has no objections to the proposals providing that the burden of enforcement is catered for through engineering and technology methods. It is proposed that two-way shuttle working traffic signals together with licence plate recognition cameras will be utilised to provide the technical solution to enforcement. Advanced stop lines are proposed to assist slower moving cyclists.
- 4.10 As indicated in Section 3 above, the Newbury Retail Association is opposed to Park Way Bridge being limited to buses, taxis and cycles only. The Association wants all traffic to be able to continue to use the bridge southbound as it does now.
- 4.11 Unfortunately this decision is not workable. If buses are removed from the pedestrianised zone, which is the consensus that came out of the public consultation on Newbury Vision 2025, it follows that they would need to relocate to Park Way. This is where new bus stops are to be provided as part of the S278 works for the Parkway development. It is known from previous experience during town centre projects that two way traffic lights on Park Way bridge causes extensive congestion if normal traffic is permitted to use the bridge.
- 4.12 The Taxi Trade has welcomed the opportunity to make use of Park Way Bridge.
- 4.13 The Royal Mail delivery office in Newbury has been advised that the Council wishes to remove its vehicles from the pedestrianised zone during the day. They have no objection to this but wish to use Park Way Bridge, which would be restricted to buses, taxis and cycles only because they consider it an important main route for their collection vehicles. They have said that denial of this access route will undoubtedly have significant impact on the collection service that they will be able to offer their many business customers in Newbury. They have indicated that for this reason they oppose this part of the Council's proposals and wish their opposition to be registered.
- 4.14 Under the Council's proposals Park Way Bridge would be converted to a two-way public transport corridor. This corridor would allow buses, taxis and cycles to use the route via a bus / taxi / cycle lane. This lane is required in order for the Council to carry out its own enforcement using the licence plate recognition cameras. The regulations that would come into place with the necessary TRO do not allow use by any other vehicles except emergency service vehicles when responding to

emergency calls. Consequently it will not be possible to agree to Royal Mail's request to permit their vehicles to use the bridge.

4.15 When the issue of what traffic should be permitted to use Park Way Bridge was considered in February it was decided that on balance 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 was the best solution. It is considered that this is still the only workable option that can be adopted if buses are to be removed from the pedestrianised zone and this is therefore the recommended way forward.

4.16 **Summary of recommendations**

4.16.1 **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.**

5. **Removal of taxis from Market Place**

5.1 This proposal has been the most controversial one and there has been a considerable volume of comments from stakeholders during the feedback process.

5.2 As would be expected the taxi trade is totally opposed to removal of the Market Place rank. A meeting was held on 10 June 2010 with representatives from West Berkshire Hackney and Private Hire Association (WBHPHA) and Cabco Hackney Carriage Drivers Association (CABCO) at the Council's offices to discuss the proposed traffic management changes and seek feedback. It was agreed at the meeting that WBHPHA and CABCO would provide a formal written response to the Council's proposals. This was duly received on 30 July 2010 in the form of minutes of the meeting together with a covering letter. The response contained fifty six comments, many of which were not relevant to the specific proposals regarding the changes to traffic management in the town centre. However these have all been included in the feedback table in **Appendix A**, together with officer responses so that Members have all of the information necessary to inform the final decision that they make regarding this particular issue. The covering letter is also included as **Appendix 2** to the table in **Appendix A**.

5.3 Attached to the written response was a petition containing 194 signatories that says:

"We the undersigned, wish to make a formal complaint against West Berkshire District Council ("WBC") in respect of their "Newbury Vision" plan to remove taxis from the market square taxi rank. We agree with the West Berkshire Taxi and Private Hire Association and the Cabco Association that this plan is not in the interests of the elderly with mobility issues, the disabled who will have further to travel to a taxi rank, or the public generally. We believe that moving the taxi rank to the wharf will increase the possibility of public disorder and will increase crime and fear of crime. We agree that moving the rank to the other end of the market square as shown on the drawing overleaf will be of benefit to Newbury town centre. WBC are instructed to log an individual formal complaint against this policy for each petitioner who affixes their signature below. Thank you."

The petition was subsequently presented to the Council on 4 August 2010. The drawing referred to in the petition has been included as **Appendix 1** to the table in **Appendix A** to this report.

- 5.4 This proposal from the taxi trade to move the existing rank to the northern end of Market Place is their Option 1 in their response. They propose that the relocated rank should operate as a permanent 24 hour rank. Their comments and officer responses to them regarding this option can be found in response numbers 64 to 73 in **Appendix A**.
- 5.5 Members are particularly asked to consider the fact that this proposal does not conform with the Council's current aspiration to remove all but emergency service vehicles during pedestrianisation hours and to encourage use of the Market Place for events and pavement cafés. There are currently two 64 chair license holders for the provision of pavement cafes at this end of Market Place and the rank in this location would not be conducive to the atmosphere that is being sought. It is accepted that these two license holders have so far failed to make use of their licenses but it is expected that this situation will change as economic conditions improve. There are also six license holders who are currently operating in Market Place, namely Paramount Restaurants (formerly Café Uno) – 16 chairs, Strada – 20 chairs, Pizza Express – 10 chairs, Hogs Head – 12 chairs, Corn Exchange – 20 chairs and Silva Robinson – 6 chairs. It is also anticipated that there will be more applications for pavement cafés, especially with the new Wetherspoons in Market Place.
- 5.6 It has been claimed by the taxi trade that if relocated there would be a visible line of sight from the front of the feeder rank to the back of the main rank, thus speeding flow of taxis at peak times. It is true that there would be a visible line of sight of the back of a rank positioned at the northern end of Market Place from the feeder rank. However when taxis left from the front of the Market Place rank and the others moved forward the first taxi waiting in the feeder rank would move forward but the next taxi would have to wait until the first one disappeared from view before proceeding. This would continue until the Market Place rank was full and the taxi at the back could be seen. This is no different from how the current traffic light system works. It is considered that to make best use of the environmentally enhanced Market Place for events and as a pavement café area it would not be appropriate for the rank to be relocated to the northern end of Market Place as requested by the taxi trade. Consequently it is recommended that this request should be declined.
- 5.7 Option 2 put forward by the taxi trade is to remove taxis from the Market Place rank in the daytime only and retain the rank outside of pedestrianisation hours (ie between 5.00 pm and 10.00 am). This proposal is supported by the WBDA. There are difficulties associated with this option however. During the day the feeder rank in Wharf Street would be used as a formal rank but at night it would be used as both a formal rank and a feeder rank to the Market Place rank. This would cause considerable confusion to customers and would make it difficult for taxi drivers trying to operate effectively.
- 5.8 Thames Valley Police have indicated that they cannot see a problem with the taxis being excluded from Market Place. They agree that the taxis should not be allowed during the pedestrianisation hours if the buses will cease to flow into the town during these times. They say that shoppers will become familiar with knowing where to obtain taxis home, namely the Wharf for Market Place and Northbrook Street for

the north end of the town and Parkway. They however wish to see retention of a rank at night and have suggested that provision of a night time only rank at the existing bus stop outside the main post office would be a viable and acceptable compromise. The issue of public disorder as mentioned in the petition is one that has been discussed by the police in their response but is not of particular concern providing there is some visibility of taxis at night when customers leave the pubs and clubs at closing time.

- 5.9 Turning to the issue of the comments in the petition relating to the Council's proposal to remove taxis from Market Place not being in the interests of the elderly with mobility issues, the disabled who will have further to travel to a taxi rank, or the public generally. It was acknowledged in the February report that there might be some opposition from groups representing people with mobility problems about the loss of the taxi rank in Market Place and in order to try to overcome these potential objections it was 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 short distance from Market Place.
- 5.10 Newbury Town Centre NAG is also opposed to removal of the Market Place rank. They have said that it would give disabled and elderly people a problem, it is a long way to walk to the feeder rank in the Wharf if you are incapacitated in any way and it is best to get people out of Market Place quickly. The Corn Exchange has indicated that it would be a more pleasant experience for its customers sitting outside but would make access harder for patrons with mobility problems who are used to being dropped off at the front door.
- 5.11 Since the Executive meeting in February investigations have been carried out to identify further opportunities to provide more taxi rank spaces around the town centre in addition to conversion of the feeder rank in Wharf Street in order to further address these legitimate concerns.
- 5.12 These investigations have identified or confirmed the following locations where additional taxi rank spaces could be provided whilst still catering for other uses such as loading and use by buses:
- Full time rank spaces on the west side at the northern end of Northbrook Street in the current bus stop (3 taxis);
 - Part time rank spaces in Bartholomew Street near Iceland in the existing bus stop (5 taxis) operational from 5.00pm until 10.00 am;
 - Night time only rank spaces in Bartholomew Street immediately south of the Iceland bus stop (3 taxis) operational from 10.00 pm until 6.00 am;
 - Night time only rank spaces in Bartholomew Street near the Dolphin Public House on the west side (5 taxis) operational from 6.00 pm until 8.00 am;
 - Night time only rank in Cheap Street outside the main post office at the bus stop (3 taxis) operational from 12.00 midnight until 6.00 am.

It is therefore recommended that these new rank spaces should be provided.

- 5.13 In the case of the proposal to convert the existing bus stop near Iceland to a taxi rank at all times except during pedestrianisation hours, the taxi trade have indicated that the existing raised platform should be retained. They believe that this will

provide good accessibility for disabled customers and would be usable for all types of taxis. The WBDA indicated in their response that the bus platform would need to be removed and the paving made good if the buses were going to be removed from the pedestrianisation zone. However they were not aware of the proposal to convert the bus stop for use by taxis because this proposal has arisen during review of the project proposals.

- 5.14 The Council's Access Officer has been consulted and has said that she is wholly in favour of this proposal as it will go some way to improving access to our taxi provision, that the kassel kerbs will be appropriate for side entry vehicles and that the rank would have sufficient dimensions to accommodate rear entry vehicles. She has added that it would not just be suitable for wheelchair access but could be used fully by all taxis with sufficient signage to raise awareness and that Iceland is a good location. If it is possible it is intended to retain the bus shelter because this would make this location an attractive rank between 5.00 pm and 10.00 am. The Access Officer also supports this proposition. It is therefore recommended that the raised platform and kassel kerbs are retained and if possible the bus shelter as well.
- 5.15 On the matter of the proposal to remove the rank from Market Place the Access Officer has rightly indicated that the management of this change will be crucial. She has suggested that the multi-storey car parks be utilised as drop off and pick up points with the connection to Shopmobility for scooter loan being encouraged. This would meet our requirement for the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) for those with limited mobility but not a wheelchair user. Finally she has said that this information will need to be promoted to the taxi trade and to the wider service user to ensure a smooth transition.
- 5.16 The existing rank in Market Street that was installed using funding from the Cinema project holds 5 taxis and the signing has been enhanced to make its presence more obvious to customers. It is quite close to Market Place and the entrance to Kennet Centre in Market Street. Also the new rank that is to be provided in Park Way adjacent to the ramp access into the new Parkway development will hold 4 taxis. Finally there are two existing ranks at the northern end of Northbrook Street, one on the west side that holds 4 taxis and one on the east side that holds 5. Both of these ranks together with the new one that is proposed in the current Northbrook Street bus stop are well placed to serve the new Parkway development via the East Street access as well as Northbrook Street itself.
- 5.17 The WBDA, Newbury Town Centre NAG and the Taxi Trade have all identified the need for engineering changes to be carried out at the feeder rank in Wharf Street to make it accessible for wheelchair users. This is agreed by officers and outline design work has been carried out. As well as proposing improved access to the rank by providing a new short length of footway to link the route from Market Place to the existing traffic separation island, it is proposed that a new waiting / boarding area is created that will enable both side or rear access to taxis by wheelchair users. The current feeder rank holds about 10 taxis but is not at all user friendly, particularly for wheelchair users. The proposed facility addresses these difficulties but it does result in the number of taxis that can be accommodated reducing to 7. However it is considered that this is not a high price to pay in order to address the concerns about wheelchair access that have been raised, especially since additional taxi rank spaces are proposed elsewhere around the town centre. The

proposed layout for the conversion of the feeder rank to a formal rank is shown on drawing number 81493/WTR/001 in **Appendix D**.

- 5.18 Summarising the position, the current situation is that there are 28 taxi rank spaces in the town centre (4 in Market Place, 10 in Wharf Street, 5 in Market Street and 9 in Northbrook Street). It should be noted however that the Wharf Street rank is not a formal rank but a feeder rank. If the proposals are adopted and the new ranks are provided the position will remain the same during the day with 28 taxi rank spaces (7 in Wharf Street, 5 in Market Street, 12 in Northbrook Street, 4 in Parkway) but the Wharf Street rank will be a formal rank. Outside of the pedestrianisation hours however, there would be an additional 16 rank spaces (13 in Bartholomew Street and 3 in Cheap Street) giving a total of 44 taxi rank spaces.
- 5.19 An Option 4 has been put forward by the taxi trade as their preferred option. This is to introduce their Option 1 (to move the existing rank to the northern end of Market Place) for a 12 month trial period before making any final decisions. It is acknowledged that this option is the one that the taxi trade wish to put forward as their preferred one but as indicated above there are reasons why Option 1 is not considered appropriate. Consequently it is not considered appropriate to introduce this option on a trial basis either.
- 5.20 The option identified as Option 3 in the taxi trade's response is the Council's original option, which is to permanently remove the Market Place rank and convert the current feeder rank in Wharf Street to a permanent formal rank. As mentioned at the start of this section this option has not been well received by the taxi trade and by some stakeholders. The taxi trade have cited loss of earnings; problems for the elderly, the sick and the infirm; trouble from night time revellers in the Wharf; traffic risks; crime and fear of crime; taxis manoeuvring and reversing; the need to make engineering changes to the feeder rank; and loss of blue badge spaces in the Wharf car park as reasons against going ahead with this proposal.
- 5.21 It is considered that the Parkway development will bring changes to the town and if the traffic management proposals are adopted there would be an attractive vehicle free environment. There would be other options for taxis elsewhere in Newbury so there is no evidence to suggest that there would be any loss of earnings. It is considered that the comments about use of the Wharf Street rank causing trouble on busy nights and for big events, and increasing crime and fear of crime are overstated. If a big event was being held in Market Place it is likely that the Market Place rank would have been taken out of use in any case. If we are just referring to routine night time activity there is no reason to suppose that the Wharf Street rank would cause any more trouble than the existing Market Place rank. It is considered that traffic risks will be minor because with southbound traffic removed from Park Way Bridge vehicle movements will be fairly low in Wharf Street.
- 5.22 It is not considered necessary for blue badge spaces in the Wharf car park to be lost nor that it will be necessary for taxis to reverse. At night when numbers of people waiting for taxis are likely to be higher, taxi drivers will have the option of exiting through Market Place as well as via Wharf Road or Park Way Bridge. It is accepted that some engineering changes are required and these have been designed in outline as discussed above. It is therefore recommended that the feeder rank is converted to a permanent formal rank and that layout shown on drawing number 81493/WTR/001 in **Appendix D** should be adopted.

- 5.23 One final aspect of the proposal to change the feeder rank to a formal rank that should be mentioned is the future situation regarding the traffic light system that currently links the feeder rank in Wharf Street to the main rank in Market Place. There is no requirement to provide feeder ranks although WBC has provided one in Newbury because of the special circumstances of there being a main rank within a zone controlled by rising bollards fed from a rank outside and because historically more taxis than the current 4 were permitted in Market Place. However if all of the additional ranks are provided as now proposed, this traffic light system would no longer be required. Taxis would rank in various locations and move from rank to rank depending on passenger needs and no one rank would be deemed as a main rank. Feeder ranks are rarely provided in other towns and cities so Newbury would fall in line with the normal situation. Consequently it is intended that the traffic light system would be removed.
- 5.24 Additional rank spaces have now been proposed that will address many of the concerns, some of which are close to Market Place. Also it should be remembered that although there would be no rank in Market Place there is no reason why taxis cannot enter any areas of the pedestrianisation zone before 10.00 am or after 5.00 pm to drop off or pick up passengers. Indeed this applies to any vehicles. It is not an offence to drop off or pick up where there is restricted parking. It is only an offence to park. Taking into account all of the pros and cons as set out in this section, it is considered that it is still appropriate to proceed with the Council's proposal to permanently remove the Market Place rank and to convert the feeder rank in Wharf Street to a formal rank. It is therefore recommended that this option should be proceeded with and that all of the alternative options put forward by the taxi trade should be rejected. The petition organisers should be advised accordingly.
- 5.25 **Summary of recommendations**
- 5.25.1 **To introduce additional full time taxi rank spaces on the west side at the northern end of Northbrook Street in the current bus stop.**
- 5.25.2 **To introduce part time taxi rank spaces in Bartholomew Street near Iceland at the existing bus stop operational from 5.00pm until 10.00 am.**
- 5.25.3 **To retain the existing raised platform, kassel kerbs and, if possible, the bus shelter at the proposed taxi rank near Iceland.**
- 5.25.4 **To introduce night time only taxi rank spaces in Bartholomew Street immediately south of the Iceland bus stop operational from 10.00 pm until 6.00 am.**
- 5.25.5 **To introduce night time only taxi rank spaces in Bartholomew Street near the Dolphin Public House on the west side operational from 6.00 pm until 8.00 am.**
- 5.25.6 **To introduce a night time only taxi rank in Cheap Street outside the main post office at the bus stop operational from 12.00 midnight until 6.00 am.**
- 5.25.7 **To convert the feeder taxi rank in Wharf Street to a formal rank where customers would be able to get a taxi.**

5.25.8 To carry out the engineering improvements at the Wharf Street taxi rank as indicated on drawing number 81493/WTR/001 in Appendix D to make it more accessible to wheelchair users.

5.25.9 To permanently remove the taxi rank from Market Place, to prevent taxis from driving through Market Place during pedestrianisation hours and to advise the petition organisers accordingly.

6. Introduction of a loading ban in Wharf Street

6.1 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 pedestrianisation 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 proposed taxi rank that would be created at the current feeder rank.

6.2 In February the Executive resolved to introduce a loading ban on the section of Wharf Street between Wharf Road and the rising bollards to coincide with the operational time of the pedestrianisation zone. There have been no comments received on this proposal from stakeholders except from the Head of Cultural Services. He has indicated that loading should be discouraged outside the Museum in order to:

- Remove the risk of physical damage to the historic buildings by Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV's) loading and turning;
- Improve the visual presence of the Museum generally and the entrance specifically, which is often hidden by HGV's and vans parked to unload;
- Ensure the dropped kerb near the Museum entrance for wheelchair users is visible and accessible.

6.3 It will not be possible to implement a complete loading ban at all times in Wharf Street because there is a need to provide some loading provision for the businesses in this road and to keep carry distances to a reasonable length. Consequently it is intended that a short length of loading will be permitted on the south side outside of pedestrianisation zone times only between Wharf Road and the turning head near the rising bollards. This will cater for the loading need but also ensure that the Museum building is kept clear. The purpose of preventing loading during pedestrianisation zone times on this short length is to make this length of loading consistent with the loading permitted within the pedestrianisation zone, thereby encouraging businesses to arrange deliveries before 10.00 am and after 5.00 pm. It is therefore recommended that loading is prevented at all times in Wharf Street from Wharf Road to the start of the block paving just west of the Museum, except for the short length on the south side, where loading will be permitted outside of pedestrianisation times.

6.4 Summary of recommendations

6.3.1 To introduce a ban on loading at all times in Wharf Street between its junction with Wharf Road and the point where the block paving commences immediately west of the Museum, except for a short length on the south side between Wharf Road and the turning head, where loading would be permitted outside of the operational times of the pedestrianisation zone.

7. Change of pedestrianisation zone end time

7.1 Thames Valley Police was the only stakeholder to comment on the proposal to bring forward the pedestrian zone end time from 6.00 pm to 5.00 pm. The Town Centre Operational Policing Team said that this would cause potential for conflict with pedestrians who are used to the pedestrianisation lasting until 6.00 pm and allowing traffic to flow from 5.00 pm when shops will still be open would result in increased potential for that conflict to occur. However this issue was covered in the report to the Executive on 18 February 2010. The risk was identified but it was stated that the initial risks to pedestrians caused by the changed environment between 5.00 pm and 6.00 pm could be managed with sufficient advanced publicity and use of temporary signs. It was concluded that on balance the benefits for traffic flow of bringing forward the pedestrianisation end time justified this proposed change. The Local Police Area Commander subsequently commented that the risk presented by bringing forward the time of traffic flow to 5.00 pm will need to be proactively managed but clearly this is in hand.

7.2 All of the various issues and possible permutations for pedestrian zone timings were covered in considerable detail in the 18 February 2010 report to the Executive and in the 23 July 2008 report to the Newbury Town Centre Task Group that are listed as key background documentation to this report. These have not all been repeated again in this report because the Executive resolved in February to change the pedestrianisation end time from 6.00 pm to 5.00 pm and the Police are not opposed to this providing the change is managed adequately.

7.3 However it is worth reminding Members of the rationale for this proposed change. 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. It is therefore recommended that the change should go ahead.

7.4 Summary of recommendations

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

8. Permanent traffic management solution for West Street

8.1 In the February report to the Executive consideration was given to the possibility of closing West Street at its junction with Northbrook Street because this had been suggested by some stakeholders. However a number of problems were identified with this proposal as follows:

- West Street provides the escape route for vehicles that continue to drive down Northbrook Street during pedestrianisation hours and arrive at the rising bollards;
- 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 Strawberry Hill;
- The geometry of the junction of Strawberry Hill with West Street is poor as it is situated on a double bend and visibility to the north is not ideal. Changing West Street to two-way would add north to east and south to east movements that would increase the risks of accidents at the junction;
- The width of West Street is nominally 5 metres, which is too narrow to accommodate two-way traffic for the number of vehicle movements that would occur;
- There is no chance of providing a turning head at the eastern end of West Street that would be required for service vehicles;

8.2 There are no benefits from closing West Street at its junction with Northbrook Street. The Executive resolved in February that the current traffic management arrangements for West Street should remain as they are now. None of the interest groups or organisations have commented on this and so there is no reason to change the decision taken in February.

8.3 Summary of recommendations

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

9. Next steps

9.1 It is proposed that as soon as the Executive has confirmed how it wishes to proceed with the traffic management proposals for Newbury town centre, the proposals should be published on the Council's Web site to inform individual stakeholders. Following this Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) that will be required to effect the changes will need to be finalised and the statutory advertisement and consultation process commenced. There will be further opportunities for stakeholders to formally respond to the proposals at this statutory advertisement and consultation stage. Authority is therefore sought for carrying out the statutory advertisements and consultations on the TRO's required to deliver this project.

- 9.2 Subject to there being no objections to the statutory advertisements and consultations on these TRO's that cannot be overcome, officers would wish to proceed with all work necessary to implement all of the proposed changes in time for the opening of the Parkway development. Authority to proceed is therefore requested.
- 9.3 In the event that there are objections to the statutory advertisements and consultations, authority is sought for these to be referred to the Portfolio Member for Highways, Transport (Operational) and ICT for consideration by means of an Individual Decision report.
- 9.4 **Summary of recommendations**
- 9.4.1 **To authorise officers to carry out statutory advertisements and consultations on all of the Traffic Regulation Orders that will be necessary to introduce the proposed traffic management changes and compliment the Parkway development.**
- 9.4.2 **Subject to there being no objections to the statutory advertisements and consultations on these 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.**
- 9.4.3 **To authorise officers to refer any objections on these 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.**

10. Conclusions

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 In approving thirteen recommendations contained in the first report on these traffic management proposals for Newbury town centre on 18 February 2010 the Executive agreed that officers should discuss the proposals with various interest groups and organisations that represent Newbury town centre stakeholders to obtain feedback on them.
- 10.3 Following this discussion process there has been a considerable response from the stakeholders and consequently it has been necessary to respond to this feedback and to develop further proposals to seek to overcome concerns that have been raised. It should be pointed out that in developing further proposals it has been necessary to make compromises because different interest groups and organisations have different needs and views.

- 10.4 The Executive is requested to consider the implications of the various interrelated factors that have been discussed at length in this second report and the recommendations summarised at the end of each section. The detailed recommendations, that now total nineteen, are set out in the Recommended Action section of this report and the Executive is invited to resolve accordingly.
- 10.5 It is considered that because all of the traffic management proposals are closely interrelated, it will be necessary for all of them to be implemented at the same time. The exact date will be determined closer to the time that the retail element of the Parkway development nears completion but it is anticipated that this will be around mid October 2011.

Appendices

Appendix A – Feedback Responses from Interest Groups and Organisations.

Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment – Stage One.

Appendix C – Equality Impact Assessment – Stage Two.

Appendix D – Wharf Street Taxi Rank Proposal – Proposed Layout.

Consultees

Local Stakeholders: Feedback has been obtained from interest groups and organisations that represent Newbury town centre stakeholders. Further stakeholder consultation will be carried out as a part of the statutory advertisement and consultation process required to introduce the Traffic Regulation Orders necessary for the various traffic management changes proposed.

Officers Consulted: John Ashworth; Mark Edwards; Bryan Lyttle; Jenny Graham; Melanie Ellis; Valerie Witton; Elaine Walker; David Appleton.

Trade Union: Not applicable.