

CITY OF PLYMOUTH

Subject: Cornwall Street Rank Review
Committee: Taxi Licensing Committee
Date: 24 January 2013
Cabinet Member: Councillor Coker
CMT Member: Anthony Payne, Director for Place
Author: Andy Netherton, Unit Manager (Safety, Health and Licensing)
Contact: Tel: 01752 304742 Email: andy.netherton@plymouth.gov.uk
Ref:
Key Decision: No
Part: I

Purpose of the report:

To inform the Committee of the results of an investigation into the potential for a hackney carriage rank at Cornwall Street, adjacent to Drake Circus.

Corporate Plan 2012-2015:

Deliver Growth – An efficient and professional hackney carriage service forms part of the City's public transport system. The tourist economy will benefit from a high quality and efficient transport system

Reduce Inequality – Research has identified that those on lowest incomes have a proportionately greater use of taxis. Disabled groups will also have specific demands for these services, which includes ease of access and usage across the city.

Provide Value for Communities – The provision of any Council service must provide best value

**Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:
Including finance, human, IT and land**

None

Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:

Members should be aware that Section 17 of the Crime Disorder Act 1998 put a statutory duty on every Local Authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the need to do all that it reasonably can do to prevent crime and disorder in its area.

Access to an effective transport system has been considered within this report. Although there may be marginal benefit from the provision of a rank in Cornwall Street the risks to public safety outweigh these benefits. Suitable alternative provision exists on nearby ranks.

Recommendations & Reasons for recommended action:

That the Committee note the contents of this report

The delegated authority for the approval of hackney carriage ranks is the responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Transport.

Alternative options considered and reasons for recommended action:

None

Background papers:

All papers are attached

Sign off:

Fin		Leg	16294/ag/ 10.1.13	HR		Corp Prop		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member											
Have you consulted the Cabinet Member(s) named on the report? Yes											

The Taxi Licensing Committee requested that officers investigate the possibility for a new hackney carriage rank to be introduced in Cornwall Street. This report identifies the work completed by officers and the findings of their investigations.

Historical Background

A rank existed to the rear of Marks and Spencers in Cornwall Street for many years, which was reasonably well used. This rank was removed as part of the redevelopment for the Drake Circus development and not replaced due to the new traffic management plan. This was introduced to minimise vehicular access for public safety and to improve the pedestrian experience.

There have been frequent requests by the trade to re-introduce this rank and the licensing team have facilitated discussions over the years. Each time objections have been received from the Police, Highways and the Parking Unit. The principle problems relate to the potential for increased vehicle usage and over ranking which would cause unacceptable risks to public safety.

Legal Background

The process for the introduction of a new rank is governed by S.21 Plymouth City Council Act 1975. For a rank to be approved the Council must:

- Give notice to the Police
- Issue a public notice in the press
- Consider objections

No rank may:

- Unreasonably prevent access to property
- Affect bus stops
- Be on a highway without the consent of the Highway Authority

Current Rank Provision

Appendix I shows the position of the existing daytime ranks and their capacities.

Of these ranks only Old Town Street is used by the trade and therefore frequented by the public. Whimble Street is used as a feeder rank for Old Town Street.

For those that have mobility impairment the ranks in Charles Street and Mill Street could provide an alternative to Old Town Street if serviced by the trade.

Current Access and parking restrictions

The original traffic management plan was introduced to minimise vehicle access and as such a rising bollard was installed. This, apart from a very short period, has never been used. Vehicles are prevented from loading at any time in the pedestrianised area. Recent case law, however, does permit vehicles to drop off or pick up. Providing licensed vehicles are not waiting for a fare then no civil enforcement action will be taken by the parking unit.

Licensed vehicles routinely access Cornwall Street on pre-booked journeys. M&S has a free phone available for customers to call a private hire company for this purpose.

Vehicles are instructed to undertake any manoeuvring in the rear courtyard to reduce risks to pedestrians.

Current Rank Review

The Taxi Licensing Committee requested that the provision of a rank in Cornwall Street be reviewed. This was based on a perception of passenger need and to provide convenient access for those with mobility restrictions. An additional rank may also assist in reducing over ranking at Old Town Street and its feeder ranks.

Officers requested a road safety audit and obtained initial observations from the Police, Highways and the City Centre Traffic Management Group. An 'appeal' was also requested from Highways to review the findings of the road safety audit

The results of this consultation were as follows:

Road Safety Audit

The report is contained in Appendix 2. The recommendation from this report was to not increase the numbers of vehicles using this pedestrianised area (including access to the rear courtyard of Marks and Spencer) for the following reasons:

- Pedestrians are less likely to expect vehicle movements in the area
- Continued vehicle usage will damage paving and may cause slips or trip hazards
- Vehicle manoeuvring, e.g. turning, increase risk of injury
- There are under utilised ranks nearby

Police

The Police fully supported the recommendations of the Road Safety Audit and would not support the introduction of a rank.

Parking Unit

Agreed with preventing further vehicle usage to this area, but may accommodate usage of the rear courtyard.

City Centre Company Manager

Provided the current drop off and pick up point arrangement remains then he can see no reason for a rank. Any new rank would increase risk to pedestrians and encourage parking along the pedestrianised route.

Highways

Agreed with the audit findings in objecting to a rank along the Cornwall Street area, but would accept a rank in the rear courtyard.

Plymouth Licenced Taxi Association

The PLTA were contacted regarding the potential for a rank in the rear courtyard and their response is contained in Appendix 3. They do not feel that a rank in the rear courtyard would be supported or practical but wanted a rank in Cornwall Street.

Disabled groups

Discussions were held with Shop Mobility, Plymouth Area Disability Action Network and the Social Inclusion Unit.

Feedback indicated that the current level of rank provision was satisfactory and there was no feeling that an additional rank within Cornwall Street was required to meet a demand.

Information gathered as part of the Unmet Demand Survey indicated that the majority of disabled passengers will use pre booked services (Hackney or Private Hire), rather than utilise ranks.

Rear Courtyard

The rear courtyard presents some practical and safety issues if it were to be considered as a rank location.

Currently this area is heavily utilised by HGVs and other vehicles for the delivery of products to the commercial outlets that surround the courtyard.

The use of this area has three major negative aspects:

- Loading/unloading bays would have to be removed from use during shopping hours. This would need the approval of the businesses using these bays and deliveries would have to be timed outside of the rank operation.
- The rank must be carefully located to avoid risks to the public from manoeuvring HGVs. This may require an additional safety audit
- The rank would be unsighted from the access road and so licensed vehicles would access this area speculatively. Where the rank was full this may lead to over ranking but also will lead to increased unnecessary vehicle movements in Cornwall Street, which was a major cause for concern in the road safety audit.

Conclusions

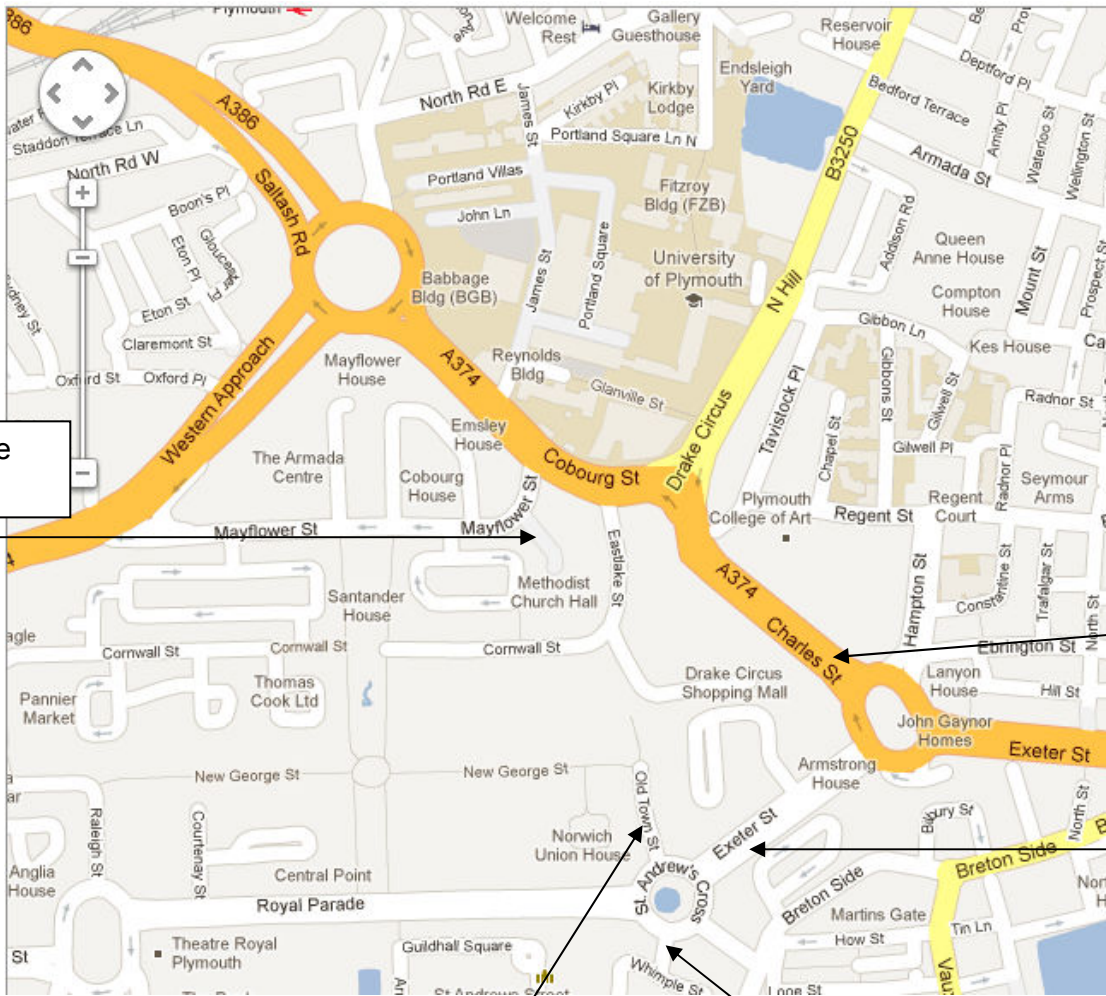
- There is general consensus amongst the Police and Highways that a rank positioned along Cornwall Street adjacent to Drakes Circus would receive objections based on unacceptable risks to public safety.
- The only potentially acceptable area is the rear courtyard accessed from Cornwall Street
- There are practical problems in locating a rank in the courtyard that would prevent a rank being introduced
- The PLTA did not support a rank in the rear courtyard
- A large amount of time would be required to try and resolve the problems of using the rear courtyard, when it may not receive the support from the trade
- Passengers, including those with mobility issues, have access to a well supplied rank in Old Town Street and other ranks are available if serviced by the trade
- Alternative ranks are not well signposted and so are not used by the trade or passengers who are use to the rank in Old Town Street.
- There is, therefore, no benefit in undertaking further work on a rank adjacent to Drakes Circus at this time.

Future actions

The option for a rank in Cornwall Street, adjacent to Drakes Circus will be kept under review and new proposals brought forward if circumstances change. The legislative changes brought about by the Law Commission review of taxi legislation may introduce new concepts and new requirements for rank approval. Licensing Officers meet quarterly with the PLTA and Cornwall Street will be reviewed should circumstances change.

Appendix I

Map of current ranks near to Drakes Circus



2 space rank

2 space rank

4 space rank

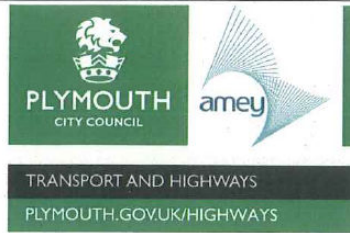
14 space rank

3 space rank

Appendix 2

Taxi Rank Assessment, Cornwall Street, City Centre
ROAD SAFETY AUDIT REPORT - STAGE 1

**BEST ACHIEVING
COUNCIL OF THE YEAR**



**Taxi Rank Assessment
Cornwall Street,
City Centre
Plymouth**

ROAD SAFETY AUDIT REPORT – FEASIBILITY STAGE

Plymouth Transport & Highways

Amey Consulting

Report number: 1474924 – RSA FS

March 2012

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report results from a Feasibility Stage Road Safety Audit requested by Plymouth City Council for the review of the possibility of providing a taxi rank in the pedestrian zone at the east end of Cornwall Street, Plymouth or in the delivery yard to the rear of the Marks and Spencers Store.

The site was inspected on Monday 5th March 2012. The weather conditions were overcast and the road surface was dry.

The audit was carried out by:

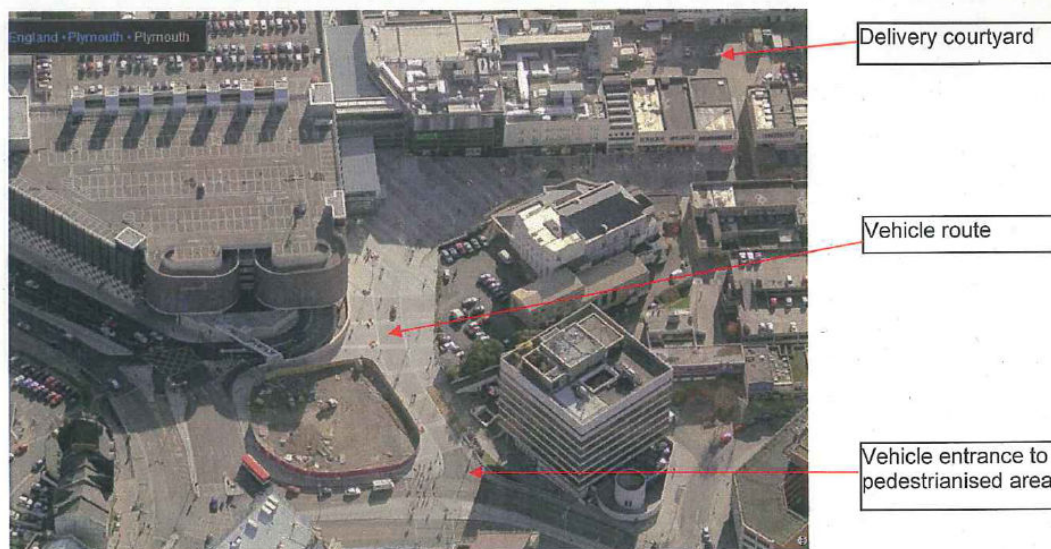
Graham Martin

Engineer, Plymouth Transport & Highways, Amey Consulting.

The audit has been carried out with reference to *Plymouth City Council's Road Safety Audit Procedures May (1999)*. The auditor has examined only those issues within the design relating to the road safety implications of the scheme and has therefore not examined or verified the compliance of the design to any other criteria. It is the responsibility of the designer to verify the design or proposed changes in design.

2.0 SITE CONDITIONS

The eastern end of Cornwall Street is a pedestrianised shopping street where pedestrians predominate and have full use of the width of highway on a single level with no kerbs. The traffic regulation orders for this area show no motor vehicles at any time except for access and no waiting or loading at any time on the areas of highway maintained at public expense. The area contains the entrances to Drakes Circus Shopping Centre, Marks and Spencer's store, some cafes and a number of other retail outlets. There is a heavy pedestrian flow to and from the university campus and the North Hill area of the city to the north of Cornwall Street. The area is surfaced using a combination of granite and precast concrete slabs, setts and blocks. There is a route through the area marked by granite blocks and channels for vehicles delivering to the courtyard at the rear of the properties. This route is constructed to sustain the loadings created by motorised vehicles but other areas are constructed to maintain pedestrian and occasional vehicle loadings only. If vehicles persistently drive over these other areas they will crack the slabs and cause the surface to break up, creating trip hazards for pedestrians and a maintenance issue.



As designed, pedestrians use the pedestrianised zone for walking and congregating. As there is a low number of vehicles using the area there is a correspondingly very low number of personal injury accidents reported in the City Centre pedestrianised zones. However, the reported accidents do include vehicles turning adjacent to groups of pedestrians hitting members of the groups and pedestrians stepping backwards into the path of a vehicle which they have not heard approaching.

There are two taxi ranks on the fringes of the pedestrianised areas, one in Old Town Street and the other in Raleigh Street. These are located on the carriageway adjacent to kerbed footways which help to segregate the pedestrians from the vehicles. An inspection of the carriageway at these ranks shows that the surfacing is breaking up and pitted in Raleigh Street and Old Town Street has oil deposits, all due to the diesel and oil that is leaked from the waiting taxis. As these areas are in the carriageway away from pedestrian crossing points and desire lines they are a very small hazard to pedestrians when taxis are not waiting on the ranks. In areas where pedestrians would frequently use they would create risks of pedestrians slipping, tripping and falling.

5.0 Issued Raised from this Feasibility Stage Safety Audit

Vehicles in pedestrian zones create an obstruction for pedestrians when parked, increase the risks of injury accidents with pedestrians when moving and consistent parking in the same areas damages and contaminates the surfacing creating risks of slips, trips and falls to pedestrians using the area.

5.0 Conclusion

Unlike traffic calmed and 'home zone' areas where vehicles are expected and pedestrians are aware of and anticipate vehicle movements, pedestrianised zones are created to allow entry by very little vehicular traffic and therefore pedestrians are less likely to expect and anticipate vehicle movements.

5.0 Recommendation

Do not increase the number of vehicles allowed to enter the pedestrian zone but continue to enforce the existing traffic regulation orders. Do not allow additional vehicles to enter the zone to access the rear courtyard used by delivery vehicles for Marks and Spencers etc. Any proposed taxi ranks should be outside the boundary of the pedestrian zones such as the existing ranks in Mayflower Street, Old Town Street and Raleigh Street, where ranks can be provided on the carriageway away from pedestrian routes and desire lines. There are also underused ranks in Charles Street, Tavistock Place and outside the Money Centre which could be better utilised.

5.0 AUDIT TEAM STATEMENT

I certify that the Audit Team has examined the site specified with the sole purpose of identifying any features that could be removed or modified in order to improve the safety of the scheme. The problems identified have been noted in this report together with any associated safety improvement suggestions, which I recommend should be studied for implementation.


The Auditors have had no relevant involvement in the scheme design.

AUDIT TEAM LEADER

Graham Martin

Signed: _____

Date _____


19/3/12

Engineer, Integrated Transport Improvement Team, Amey Consulting
Plymouth Transport & Highways
Floor 10
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Plymouth
PL1 2AA

Appendix 3



Plymouth Licensed Taxi Association

Mr. Andrew Netherton,
2012.

20th October,

Unit Manager for Health & Safety and Licensing,
Plymouth City Council,
Civic Centre,
Plymouth,
PL1 2EW.

By E-Mail

Dear Mr. Netherton,

RE: CORNWALL STREET EAST TAXI RANK

We thank you for your E-Mail regarding a Taxi Rank for the above location.

On Friday 19th October, 2012 John Beaumont, Roy Hamilton and Christopher Wildman visited the Rear Car Park behind Marks & Spencer and Halfords etc. and Cornwall Street East and we wish to comment as follows:

1. a. The Car Park is kept clear for Heavy Goods Vehicles to manoeuvre and is out of sight.
 - b. The Public will not go to a taxi rank that they cannot see.
 - c. Taxi Drivers will not know if there are any Taxis on the Taxi Rank; this has the potential to cause a Pedestrian/Taxi conflict in Cornwall Street East as Taxi Drivers drive in and out on wasted journeys.
2. After looking at Cornwall Street East outside Marks & Spencer and Halfords we debated the situation. After careful consideration we wish to submit the following:
 - i) At Lamp Post 26 there could be one Taxi; Supported by:-
 - ii) At Lamp Post 30 a 4 vehicle Taxi Rank.

There is high footfall within the discussed area and we would like to keep Taxi movements as low as possible.

A Taxi Rank at Lamp Post 30 can be observed from Cobourg Street prior to turning left into Cornwall Street East thereby reducing the number of Taxis entering the area.

Should there be only one Taxi Rank; a Taxi on Lamp Post 30 could be beckoned towards Halfords by a potential passenger as is the case at other locations.

The Taxi Trade has lost a lot of custom with the removal of the Cornwall Street Taxi Rank and wish to have a replacement as a matter of urgency for the benefit of, not only the Taxi Trade but also, the elderly, mobility impaired and wheelchair using members of the public who tend to use this area.

Yours faithfully,

RWHamilton

(R. W. Hamilton) Secretary.