



**OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE
Epsom and Ewell**

**EPSOM TOWN CENTRE
PROPOSED TAXI RANKS**

13 JULY 2009

KEY ISSUE

To consider the proposal to introduce off peak taxi ranks in High Street and Upper High Street, Epsom.

SUMMARY

A request from Epsom And Ewell Borough Council has been received by East Surrey Highways to consider two locations within Epsom Town Centre where licensed taxis may wait during the late evening. Provision of the taxi ranks would be subject to enactment of an order to be issued by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council but would first need approval from the County's Local Committee.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Local Committee is asked to:

- i) Note officers' reservations regarding the possibility of abuse of the proposed taxi ranks by drivers wishing to park.
- ii) Note the potential benefits for late night trade with the town centre.
- iii) Approve the proposals on the grounds it will help ease demand for taxi parking within the town centre and have no perceived negative impact on traffic movements or safety on the highway.

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 There is currently a perceived shortage of spaces for taxis to wait within the town centre and those that exist are concentrated around the railway station on non-highway areas.
- 1.2 Hackney carriages (black cabs) and mini cabs compete for existing spaces and, when there are shortages, those drivers unable to park elsewhere, use the bus stand in High Street opposite the clock tower.
- 1.3 A taxi rank suitable for 3 vehicles already exists within the layby area immediately east of the clock tower on the south side of High Street. However, this is regularly occupied by vehicles from the nearby mini cab company.
- 1.4 Enforcement of the existing taxi rank has been sporadic due to the limitations of available parking attendant resources.
- 1.5 The evening trade is an important part of the town's economy. It is perceived this will be enhanced with greater accessibility to taxis, particularly after midnight when bus and train services are no longer available.
- 1.6 The current proposals are to introduce a taxi rank in High Street outside numbers 52 to 58 and in Upper high Street outside numbers 6 to 12. Times of operation to be 9 pm to 4 am. Please see annexes A and B.

2 ANALYSIS

- 2.1 The proposed location in High Street is currently subject to a restriction which prevents waiting at any time. No loading is permitted 07.30 – 09.30 and 16.30 – 18.30 Monday to Friday 08.30 – 17.30 Saturday.
- 2.2 The proposed location in Upper High Street is currently subject to a restriction that prevents waiting at any time. However, there is no restriction for loading.
- 2.3 Introduction of a taxi rank would not require a fresh road traffic order to be written. Provided an order under the Local Government (Misc Provisions) Act is enacted and the rank is marked and signed in accordance with the Traffic Regulations and General Directions 2002, the new restriction takes immediate precedence.
- 2.4 Given existing restriction prevent waiting at any time, there will be no displacement of legally parked private vehicles and thus no potential disadvantage for customers of nearby businesses.
- 2.5 Parking availability for taxis will clash with existing availability for loading between the hours of 9 pm and 4 am although it is not believed this will create any particular issues.

3 FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Implementation would comprise supply and erection of sign plates and placement of associated markings. In order to keep costs to minimum and minimise potential street clutter, signs would be placed on existing street furniture where possible. Including allowances for administration and traffic management, costs are estimated at £1,200.

4 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Highway Service is mindful of its needs within this area and attempts to treat all users of the public highway with equality and understanding.
- 4.2 All licensed taxis are equipped to carry persons with disabilities and the proposed provisions may be considered to be of particular benefit to this group.

5 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Ready access to transport would help reduce the potential for groups of people and vulnerable individuals to be waiting on Epsom's streets late evening. As this can be the time when unruly behaviour is most likely to occur, there may be positive implications for crime and disorder.

6 CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1 Surrey Police they have no specific objection to the proposals but advise they would have no powers to address possible complaints that the taxi ranks were being misused during the hours when parking attendants are not available.
- 6.2 Surrey's Passenger Transport Team have cited an existing problem with mini cabs parking in the bus stops along High Street during the evening. The measures proposed are intended for licensed taxis only but may help reduce competition for parking between taxis and mini cabs and thus help reduce illegal parking in bus stop areas.

7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The proposed taxi ranks have the potential to improve transport facilities for visitors to the town centre and have a positive impact on evening trade.
- 7.2 There are no resources to increase the level of parking enforcement within Epsom town centre during the late evening period with the result the proposed bays may be misused by drivers of private cars and mini cabs.
- 7.3 It is recommended that the taxi rank proposals are approved.

8 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Despite potential enforcement issues, the measures are expected to help encourage taxis to seek custom within the town centre and enhance the economic vitality of the area.

9 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- 9.1 If the proposals are approved, the matter will go forward to Epsom and Ewell Borough Council for issue of an enactment order. Following this, the measures can be installed.

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