

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member and Advisers for Regeneration and Development
2.	Date:	Monday 2nd December 2013
3.	Title:	Cycling in Rotherham town centre Vehicle Restricted Area and change to hours of access for loading / unloading.
4.	Directorate:	Environment and Development Services

5. Summary

To inform Cabinet Member of the outcome of consultation into proposals to permit cyclists to use the town centre Vehicle Restricted Area (VRA) and to extend the hours of access for loading/unloading.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended Cabinet Member resolve that:

- i) The objections to the proposed scheme be not acceded to at this time;**
 - ii) The proposed Traffic Regulation Order be made on an experimental basis for a period of twelve months;**
 - iii) During the experimental TRO period monitoring is undertaken and liaison takes place with interested groups on the operation of the TRO**
 - iv) A further report be made setting out the outcome of this monitoring**
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7. Proposals and Details

A report was made to Cabinet Member on 28th May 2012 setting out proposed cycling improvements in and towards Rotherham town centre (Minute number G1 refers). Two of the proposals in this report were to

- Permit cyclists to use the town centre Vehicle Restricted Area (VRA), to improve access by bicycle to facilities or services such as employment, retail and education within this area or to those cyclists who may wish to travel across the town centre and
- Extend the hours of access for loading/unloading in the zone from its current 17:00 to 10:00 to 16:00 to 10:00 to allow more flexible access to premises and the street market.

Cabinet Member approved the recommendations in the report and works to pursue these changes commenced.

Permitting cyclists to use the town centre VRA requires three changes to existing Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO)

- The no vehicles restriction needs to be changed to a no motor vehicles restriction
- Cyclists need to be allowed to cycle the “wrong way” down the one-way streets in the town centre VRA.
- Cyclists need to be exempted from some of the prescribed and prohibited turns within the town centre VRA.

The proposed changes require a significant number of existing TRO to be amended. Given the complexity of amending so many TRO and in the interests of simplicity the proposed changes have been incorporated into a new Consolidation Order of all movement restrictions in the town centre. As a consequence of this the draft order has taken a significant amount of time to develop.

Details of these proposals are shown on the attached plan numbers 126/14/TT563, 126/14/TT564, 126/14/TT565 copies of which are attached as Appendices A, B and C.

Initial consultation regarding the proposal was undertaken with South Yorkshire Police (SYP) in September 2012. They responded with some concerns about the effect of the permitting cyclists into the VRA on the visually impaired, elderly people and children and also on enforcement with regard to cyclists behaving in an unsafe manner. A series of measures were proposed to address these concerns namely

- Undertaking consultation with disability groups, groups representing the elderly and with town centre businesses and residents
 - The change would be launched with extensive publicity
 - Discussions would be held with Town Centre Wardens about how they could tackle anti-social cycling in the town centre should a decision be made to implement the TRO.
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SYP acknowledged the measures proposed to consult with groups who could be affected by the change and stressed that the key to the success of the change would be policing of anti-social cycling. They also suggested that the change be made on an experimental basis to gain a measure of potential problems.

Consultation with Statutory Consultees and Ward Members took place in November 2012. One response was received to this consultation from South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive where two bus operators had expressed concerns about cyclists wandering through pedestrians and Councillor Dodson responded that he would be more happy if a designated lane was introduced through the town for cyclist.

The proposed TRO was advertised on street and in the Rotherham Advertiser on 19th July 2013. A copy of the notice was sent to Statutory Consultees and Ward Members and a press release issued. In addition 366 consultation letters were also sent to town centre businesses and residents. A total of three responses were received to this consultation including two objections to permitting cyclists in the VRA.

The two objections were made on the grounds that the proposal would make the town centre less safe for pedestrians and that cyclists should have their own road area/lanes. Copies of these objections are attached as Appendix D and E. The third response was from the Canon at Rotherham Minster asking if access arrangements to the Minster for Weddings and Funerals would be altered; these would remain unchanged.

Action for Blind People and Help the Aged in were consulted on the full details of the scheme in September 2013.

The proposed scheme was discussed with the Rotherham Visually Impaired group at their meeting on 12th November 2013. Subsequent to this meeting an objection to the proposal was received from Action for Blind People, a copy of which is attached as Appendix F. In summary the objection is on the grounds that permitting cyclists into the VRA would put blind and partially sighted pedestrians at an additional risk of harm in an area within which they already have problems getting around.

The Rotherham Older Peoples Forum has also expressed concerns about the safety of elderly pedestrians if cyclist were permitted to use the town centre VRA.

In response to the concerns expressed above; cyclists would not be segregated or given their own lanes. A defined lane for cyclists could lead to higher speeds for cyclists using the town centre VRA than if they are permitted to mix with pedestrians. Routes that cyclists would be permitted to are mainly the same "road" areas of the town centre VRA as vehicles currently use. The proposed Order would not permit cyclists to use any part of All Saints Square, and Howard Street between Effingham Street and Frederick Street.

Research by the Transport Research Laboratory undertaken for the Department for Transport found no real factors to justify excluding cyclists from pedestrianised areas and that accidents between pedestrians and cyclists were very rarely generated in pedestrianised areas (only one pedestrian/cyclist accident in 15 site years) in the sites studied (Source: *Traffic Advisory Leaflet TAL 9/93 Cycling in Pedestrian Areas*).

Throughout England 36 towns and cities permit cycling in vehicle restricted areas at any time with a further 25 permitting cycling during commuter hours (*Cycling in pedestrian areas, Cycle England, 2010*).

Although cycling is currently prohibited in the town centre VRA cyclists do travel through it and the South Yorkshire Accident Database shows that there have been no injury accidents involving pedal cyclists in the town centre during the last five years.

The proposal to permit cyclists to use the town centre VRA is contentious with all objectors expressing concerns about safety. However the town centre VRA is where shops and services are located and good cycle access is desirable. The town centre VRA currently presents a barrier to cross town movement by bicycle, forcing cyclists onto very busy, indirect roads with a high number of large vehicles, which present a danger to cyclists.

This proposal is not in isolation and further improvements to make the town centre more attractive for cycling and walking are being progressed or being developed. For example the town centre 20mph zone will reduce vehicle speeds and make the environment more attractive for cycling and walking. Development work is also taking place on adding additional light controlled pedestrian crossings on the edge of the town centre and on potential improvements to route into the town centre to benefit cyclists.

Given the above concerns and the need to improve conditions for cyclists it is proposed to permit cycling in the town centre VRA on an experimental basis for a twelve-month period in order to see what problems, if any, it causes. During this period liaison would take place with Action for Blind People, Rotherham Older Peoples Forum, cycling groups and South Yorkshire Police as to how the TRO is working. In addition usage surveys would be undertaken, observations made of how cyclists behave when travelling through the town centre VRA and the injury accident record within the town centre will be reviewed.

Following this twelve-month period a decision would be made as to whether the TRO is made permanent. The analysis and information gathered through the above monitoring and liaison will be used to inform this decision and will be the subject of a further report to Cabinet Member.

8. Finance

The proposed scheme is expected to cost £10,000 and funding is available from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund Programme for 2013/2014.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

If cycling along pedestrian streets in the town centre is not permitted in appropriate areas, Rotherham town centre will continue to act as a barrier to accessing employment, retail, and education/ training for the growing number of cyclists in Rotherham. In addition the full benefits of investment in facilities for cyclists along routes into the town centre would not be realised if cyclists could not then continue along direct and safe routes to access facilities and services within the town centre or on the other side of the pedestrian areas.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The scheme supports the Sheffield City Region's Transport Aspirations and more locally it complements Rotherham's Corporate Objectives, with particular focus on:

- Making sure no community is left behind
- Creating safe and healthy communities

11. Background Papers and Consultation

In 2010 the Government announced the creation of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSFT) and made £560 million of funding available for projects over a four year period to 2014-15. South Yorkshire successfully bid for £24.6M from the fund. This bid was the subject of a report to Cabinet Member on 28 August 2012, Minute 33 refers.

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