

Cherwell District Council

Executive

6 June 2022

Traffic Orders Bus Station & Cherwell Drive

Report of Assistant Director Environmental Services

This report is public

Purpose of report

To seek to introduce new Traffic Orders covering the Bus Station & a new car park at Cherwell Drive

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To note the consultation on changing the traffic orders.
- 1.2 To approve changing the Traffic Orders at the Bus Station & the new Cherwell Drive car park while noting the objection from Stagecoach and response from the Council.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The coach parking waiting area off Cherwell Drive Banbury has low usage. The Bus Station is also underutilised with the main user being Stagecoach.
- 2.2 A project was developed to convert the existing coach park area into a long stay car park and move any displaced coaches into the bays within the bus station which are rarely used and also use additional coach parking available at Horsefair East.
- 2.3 Usage studies on the coach park were carried out and a planning application was made to convert the coach parking area into a long stay car park. The planning application was approved and a contractor appointed to carry out the necessary small civil work to convert the car park. In addition, the new car park will have up to 40 spaces with the opportunity for charging points for electric vehicles in the future and will be a pay on exit car park.
- 2.4 Consultation on changing the traffic orders for the two sites were carried out. There has been only one objection to the proposed change, from Stagecoach.

- 2.5 A meeting was held with Stagecoach regarding their objection. The objection seemed to centre on Stagecoach's dissatisfaction with council support for bus travel and access into and out of the town centre. There seemed to be no objection from changing the use of the coach park and only some dissatisfaction with potentially coaches waiting in the bus station.
- 2.6 Several meetings have been held between this Council's Planning team & Oxfordshire's transport team to listen to the views & concerns of Stagecoach. To withdraw their objection Stagecoach requested a plan/roadmap be put in place to agree changes via a Memorandum of Understanding. A template for such a roadmap was put forward by Oxfordshire County Council on the 14 January 2022. To date Stagecoach have not removed their letter of objection although staff have talked through their objections in some detail.

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 This Council operates a piece of land next to Hurrans garden centre and close to Castle Quay. The piece of land operates as a coach parking waiting area and generates no income for the Council. Current business rates for the site are charged at over £5000/ annum
- 3.2 The coach park is only be used during school term by a small number of coaches associated with school travel including transporting school children to the Sports Centre.
- 3.3 The Car Parking action plan which forms part of the Car Parking Strategy approved in 2020 looks to increase capacity in Banbury including the development of a new car park at Cherwell Drive. This increase in 40 spaces, partly offsets 90 spaces lost in this Council's car parks as a result of the Castle Quay development.
- 3.4 The development of a new pay on exit, long stay car park with electric charge points in the future will bring benefits to users of Castle Quay & the town centre. In addition, the opening of this car park will allow Bolton Road to become a short stay car park helping to increase the turnover of visitors into the town centre and the overall footfall in the town centre.
- 3.5 The bus station has nine bus bays. Three are not used and several of the other bays are underutilised. The main users of the bus station are Johnsons, National Express and Stagecoach. Stagecoach only operates bus services from the bus station which do not serve Banbury town. These buses serve villages and further afield locations such as Oxford & Brackley. In total Stagecoach have some 20,000 – 25,000 departures a year or 400-500 per week from the bus station. National Express have not used the bus station since the start of the pandemic and Johnsons are relatively low users of the bus station utilising only one bay.
- 3.6 Overall the bus station has significant under used capacity. Consequently, it was proposed to use the empty bays in the bus station for coach waiting purposes.
- 3.7 Following gaining planning permission for the conversion of the coach waiting area to a long stay car park, work to carry out small civil work and the installation of car parking equipment was procured. During the Summer, consultation on the changes

were made as part of the changes to the traffic orders for the two sites. Only one objection has been received, from Stagecoach.

3.8 Following the objection a meeting was held with Stagecoach to clarify the objection. The objection seemed not to relate to the proposed changes but more to their frustration at the access points to the town centre and their perception at a lack of support from this Council and the County Council towards bus services.

3.9 No other objections have been received. The concerns regarding access to the town centre have been passed onto Planning team and onto the County Council transport team to try and address Stagecoach's wider concerns. To date there has been no indication from Stagecoach that there is a willingness to withdraw their objection. A reply has been sent to Stagecoach addressing the points they have raised in Appendix 1. The overall project has been delayed for almost twelve months as a result of this objection to explore Stagecoach's concerns.

3.10 Stagecoach does not use the current coach stopover point. The bus station is used by Stagecoach only for services which run beyond Banbury. Consequently, there are three empty bays and at least two bays with spare capacity.

3.11 Once Cherwell Drive opens as a car park, any displaced coaches are likely to use two spaces at Horsefair, their own existing depots in Banbury with only a small number expected to use the spare spaces at the bus station. None of the other current users have objected to the moving of the coach area from Cherwell Drive.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

4.1 The Traffic orders need the approval of the Executive if they are to proceed.

4.2 If the orders are not changed then the project cannot proceed.

5.0 Consultation

5.1 Consultation took place Summer 2021. No objections received other than from Stagecoach.

5.2 Several meetings have now been held with Stagecoach to listen to their concerns regarding these changes but, it appears that their concerns are more around their perceptions of lack of local authority support for bus operations.

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: To adopt the recommendations.

Option 2: To reject the recommendations and ask officers to reconsider the overall project

7.0 Implications

7.1 Financial and Resource Implications

The capital budget for this scheme is already in place (CAP031).

The financial implications of moving the coach park and introducing a new long-stay car park have been factored into the 2022/23 budget. Not proceeding would leave the service with a budget pressure and it would have to find savings elsewhere in its budget to address this.

Comments checked by:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director of Finance, 01295 221845

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Legal Implications

- 7.2 Traffic orders are governed by the Road Traffic Act, and the Council must follow the appropriate procedure established by that legislation. Here, as the Council has appointed an external company to conduct the process to amend the traffic orders, officers are confident that the statutory process has been followed as appropriate, and the necessary consultation periods have elapsed allowing the Council to proceed with the orders as proposed in the body of this report. The outstanding objection from Stagecoach does not prohibit the Council from proceeding, but it does present a potential risk that any decision of the Council to amend the Traffic Orders as set out in the body of the report could result in a formal challenge being issued by Stagecoach. If such a challenge were issued, then the Council's legal service would need to source external support to provide advice and assistance to the service team in defending that claim. The legal service will also provide any advice and assistance required in entering into any works agreements to undertake the civil work required to change the use of the site to a car park, should that be required.

Comments checked by (prior to leaving the council):

Chris Mace, Solicitor, legal@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Risk Implications

- 7.3 The Council has followed the legal process in consulting users to the changes in this project. The only objection has been received is from Stagecoach.

Comments checked by:

Louise Tustian, Head of Insight and Corporate Programmes, 01295 221786,

Louise.Tustian@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Equalities & Climate Implications

- 7.4 There are no equalities issues associated with this project as the repurposing of the existing coach car park will not have any direct impact on bus service users. The new car park should look to include disabled parking spaces and electric vehicle charging points to ensure the new provision is accessible for all users.

Comments checked by:
Emily Schofield Acting Head of Strategy
07881 311707 emily.schofield@oxfordshire.gov.uk

8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision

Financial Threshold Met: No

Community Impact Threshold Met: No

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

An enterprising economy with strong & vibrant local centres

Lead Councillor

Councillor Dan Sames, Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Greener Communities

Document Information

Appendix number and title

- Appendix 1 - Stagecoach's objection

Background papers

None

Report Author and contact details

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