

Agenda Item No: 10
Report To: Cabinet
Date of Meeting: 13 July 2017
Report Title: Station Approach
Report Author & Job Title: James Hann, Health, Parking and Community Safety Manager
Portfolio Holder Cllr G.J Bradford, Health, Parking and Community Safety
Portfolio Holder for: Cllr N. Shorter, Finance and IT



Summary: As one of the Big 8 projects, these proposed works will enhance the Commercial Quarter and facilitate its further development. This report focuses on two improvement projects that Ashford Borough Council has identified to reduce vehicle congestion on Station Approach, and provide a safer and more direct route for pedestrians between the Commercial Quarter, railway station, town centre and Stour Centre car parks.

Key Decision: No

Significantly Affected Wards: Victoria Ward

Recommendations: **The Cabinet is recommended:-**

- I. To approve the proposal for installing a new zebra crossing on Station Approach crossing
- II. To approve the proposal to relocate the taxi waiting area to Stour Centre car park
- III. To approve the use of single source suppliers for the works
- IV. To authorise the Director of law and Governance to complete all necessary documentation for implementation of works on such terms as in the Council's interest

Policy Overview: The Council's Corporate Plan identifies stimulating economic investment and growth as a key priority. The enabling works are proposed to enhance the Commercial Quarter and facilitate its further development, bringing with it inward investment and creating employment opportunities.

Financial Implications:	There is provision in the 2017/18 budget as approved by Council in February 2017 and the costs are included within the Capital Programme.
Legal Implications:	The Enabling Works affect land that is owned by third parties and relevant consents and licences are required. Contract and procurement rules will need to be adhered to when awarding contracts for the works.
Equalities Impact Assessment	Consideration has been given to the equality duty and there should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision relating to the Enabling Works Preliminary Works. The proposed Enabling Works are ultimately intended to enhance accessibility and an Equalities Impact Assessment is attached.
Other Material Implications:	None
Exempt from Publication:	No
Background Papers:	None
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Report Title: Station Approach

Introduction and Background

1. In 2014 the council acquired International House, Dover Place Car Park and several parcels of land on the southern side of Dover Place from the Homes & Community Agency (HCA). This paved the way for the creation of Ashford Commercial Quarter.
2. In 2015 the HCA funded and delivered the Phase 1 Public realm works around International House and Dover Place. These works provided an improved pedestrian link between the Commercial Quarter and Ashford International Railway Station and began to create a sense of place that is in keeping with the aspirations of the council.
3. In 2016 the council granted planning permission for the first 80,000 sq. ft. office building. Construction of the new building commenced in January 2017 and is scheduled for completion by summer 2018.
4. Plans are underway to develop land on the southern side of Dover Place (the Island Site) with a mixed-use development. This is due for completion at the same time as the office build.
5. In addition to the above, in autumn 2017 Ashford College, located on the corner of Station Road and Elwick Road, will open its doors to its first intake of students. This will significantly increase pedestrian movements through the Commercial Quarter.
6. The council is proposing to carry out a programme of works listed below during the next 18 months. These works are proposed to enhance the Commercial Quarter to facilitate further development, encourage inward investment and create employment opportunities.
7. A Project Initiation Document (PID) was approved by the Senior Management Team in February 2017 to carry out a programme of works and feasibility funding of £25,000 was approved.
8. Indicative cost for the full enabling works is £545,000 and provision has been made in the Capital Programme approved by Council in February 2017 (Budget 2017/18).

Proposal

9. The council is proposing to carry out the programme of works specified below (the "Enabling Works"). The location of the works are shown in Appendix 1.
10. This report seeks permission to proceed with the new zebra crossing and the relocation of the taxi waiting area to the Stour Centre car park. However, the full programme of works will include:
 - I. New zebra crossing on Station Approach;

- II. Taxi waiting layby relocation to Stour Centre car park;
 - III. Construction of a new footpath and landscaping on the site of the former taxi waiting layby;
 - IV. Link footpath and footbridge over the Great Stour River;
 - V. Lining and signing project to segregate domestic vehicles from buses and taxis;
 - VI. Dover Place and Station Road junction improvements, and
 - VII. International House car park resurfacing.
11. Items VI and VII are subject of a complimentary report “Dover Place Public Realm Phase II and International House Car Park resurfacing” also on the agenda for the July 2017 Cabinet meeting.
12. Items III and IV will be progressed later this year, with completion in 2018.
13. The lining and signing project to segregate domestic traffic from buses and taxis vehicles (proposal V) is being undertaken in partnership with Southeastern Railway (SE), Network Rail, Kent County Council, Stagecoach and Ashford Borough Council. The Borough Council has contributed £3,000 to the work, which is being project managed by Southeastern Railway. The costs were funded from the parking road markings budget and work is expected to be carried out in the summer of 2017.
14. The Council has informed SE that the enforcement of the proposed road markings will be integral to the success of the lining and signing arrangements.
15. The report highlights that the following works will be undertaken in 2017:

	Works	Time Frame	Cost Estimate
I	New zebra crossing on Station Approach	September 2017	£78,000 (which includes 10% project management fee and 20% contingency)
II	Taxi waiting layby relocation to Stour Centre car park	September 2017	£90,000

16. The total estimated cost to delivery the seven Commercial Quarter Enabling Works Projects, (of which the zebra crossing is one) is £545,000. The cost of the zebra crossing and taxi waiting layby can be accommodated within the already approved £175,000 capital budget.

Zebra Crossing

17. The zebra crossing will help pedestrians to cross Station Approach and link the Commercial Quarter, the college and the town centre to the station. Currently many users of the station cross at this point, but there are no markings, signage or lights to indicate that pedestrians should cross the road in this location. The zebra crossing will be installed at the location marked in the Enabling Works Location Plan in Appendix 1.

18. Southeastern Railway (SE) have agreed to project manage the installation of a zebra crossing on Station Approach. They have also undertaken to secure the necessary permissions from Network Rail who own the land are obtained.

Taxi rank relocation

19. The existing taxi feeder layby is approximately eight vehicles long. At peak periods vehicles queue off the end of the layby creating an obstruction to other road users on Station Road, particularly buses.
20. It is proposed to move the feeder rank from Station Approach to the Stour Centre car park. The land occupied by the existing layby will permit a footway to be constructed along the northern side of Station Approach connecting the Stour Centre car park to the Commercial Quarter.
21. The two bay taxi rank, with the covered shelter, will remain where it is near the front of the domestic side of the railway station.
22. The proposed taxi waiting area in the Stour Centre car park will be two vehicles wide and have a larger capacity for taxis to wait. A CCTV camera based system will be installed to relay images of the taxi rank on the Station Forecourt back to a monitor at the front of the taxi waiting layby so that drivers can see when the rank becomes free and drive forward onto it.
23. The drawings in Appendix 2 show the proposed location, an indication of the number of vehicles that will be able to use the feeder rank at any one time, and also the proposed circulation route for taxis.
24. These improvements will achieve the following objectives:
 - A reduction in vehicle congestion on Station Approach and improvement of vehicle flows through the Station Forecourt at peak times
 - Improved pedestrian connectivity between the Stour Centre car park, the Commercial Quarter, the college and the railway station

Consultation Undertaken

25. Ashford Taxi Forum, the Joint Transport Board, Quinn Estates (the developer of the Phase 1 office block), Ashford Leisure Trust, Stagecoach, the Ashford Driving Instructors Association and the Southeastern Railway have been consulted on the proposals.
26. Discussions about the proposed relocation of the taxi waiting area took place at a number of taxi forums in 2016. A presentation was delivered to the taxi forum with detailed plans of the proposals on 6 April 2017. Taxi drivers and operators were actively encouraged to input into the proposals with a formal consultation period from 7 April to 26 April.
27. Ward Members were contacted, as were representatives of the Central Ashford Community Forum and the Mill Court management company. Plans included in the consultation can be found in Appendix 2.

28. Details of the consultation were emailed to all taxi drivers and operators for which the Council's licensing section had contact details. The consultation was placed on the Council's website, advertised on social media and sent to people and organisations that may have particular interest in the proposals. These included Southeastern Railway, Stagecoach and tenants of International House. A direct approach was made to Ashford Access to discuss the proposed changes.
29. The website included location plans of the proposed taxi waiting area in the Stour Centre car park. Detailed plans of the taxi waiting area were provided showing an indicative vehicle capacity of 17 vehicles, a swept path analysis of proposed vehicle movement, detailed information on the proposals and a link to the consultation survey. The survey asked a number of specific questions and included an opportunity to add free text responses.

Responses

30. In total 75 people responded to the consultation, 21 were taxi drivers or operators, 16 were local residents, 10 were car park users and 28 classified themselves as "other". Over 86% agreed with the aims of the proposals to reduce congestion and improve access. The location of the proposed taxi waiting area was supported by 68%. The use of a CCTV system was considered by 69% to be the best solution to inform taxi drivers that the taxi rank was empty and 54% thought that the proposed taxi waiting area layout would work in practice. Appendix 3 contains a summary of the responses.

Issues Raised

31. There was concern (primarily by taxi drivers and operators) that a two lane waiting area would cause issues when vehicles parked on the inside wanted to leave the waiting area to attend customers whose journey requests were phoned in.
32. A further meeting with taxi drivers and operators was held on 22 May to determine how the maximum vehicle capacity of the waiting area could be balanced with operational concerns.
33. An option to create 'hatched' bays within the right rank to allow for manoeuvrability from the inside lane was subsequently developed and sent out to drivers and operators. See Appendix 4.
34. The importance of a well-designed and properly maintained CCTV system was raised by a number of respondents, along with the need for a back-up system that would include a call system for disabled vehicles and other specific vehicles to be called to the taxi rank at the front of the station.
35. Other issues raised included concerns that:
 - customers would need to walk further to hail a taxi (this is not correct as the actual taxi rank remains in its current location),
 - the system would be open to abuse by unscrupulous drivers,

- that changes to the phasing of the traffic lights at the junction with the A2042 would reduce congestion (planned for 2017/2018), and
 - the 7 proposed spaces were insufficient.
36. The issue of flooding within the car park was raised by 3 respondents (this is addressed in the planning application, which was submitted in May 2017).
37. Finally, 14 positive comments received included support for the proposed zebra crossing, welcoming the proposed improvements and agreement that the proposals will help reduce congestion.

Implications

38. The proposed Enabling Works will seek to reduce vehicle congestion at Station Approach and improve the flow of vehicles through the station forecourt at peak times, as well as providing a safer and more direct route for pedestrians between the Commercial Quarter and Ashford International Station. They will also enhance the Commercial Quarter to facilitate the further development, encourage inward investment and create employment opportunities.
39. The Leader and Chief Executive met with representatives of Southeastern Railway on 14 June 2017 to discuss the proposed works and the detail pertaining to the parking enforcement on Station Approach.
40. The representatives of Southeastern were impressed with the current and planned growth of the town and agreed to support the Council putting a Traffic Regulation Order in place for Station Approach.

Financial Implications

41. The required budget for the two programmes of work are agreed and provided for within the Capital Programme for 2017/18.
42. A funding agreement will be signed between the Council and SE to facilitate the zebra crossing installation. SE would project manage the work, to an agreed standard with the Council, and obtain all necessary permissions from the landowner Network Rail.
43. The Council understand that SE will source contractors in accordance with their own procurement procedures and in this case, use a single source for expediency as this complies with their minor works framework procurement strategy.
44. It is proposed that the contract for the procurement of the relocated taxi waiting area in the Stour Centre car park is sourced from a single supplier. The proposed supplier is Quinn Estates groundwork contractor Datum. There are several benefits in adopting this approach not only with regard to timing the work to avoid the wetter winter period but also in terms of undertaking the work at the same time as the new car park is constructed on former Council

land, (which has been leased to Quinn Estates). The two construction sites are adjacent to each other and need to share the same working area. To avoid conflict between the two jobs and the potential delay to delivery it is proposed to have a single contractor working on the site delivering both the Council and the Quinn Estates works at the same time. If another contractor were to be appointed, the Council would need to restrict access to the “shared working areas” and allocate possession times to each contractor. This would result in delays and increase risk for both projects which could be avoided.

45. It is proposed that their tender price is independently verified to demonstrate they are offering a fair market price for the works.

Legal Implications

46. The Enabling Works include works on land that is owned by third parties and the relevant consents and licences will need to be obtained.
47. The work to be carried out by SE on the zebra crossing will be subject to a funding agreement that will include a requirement for SE to comply with their own procedures and indemnify the Council against any claims made.
48. Permissions will be required for the construction of a new footpath and landscaping on the site of the former taxi waiting lay-bay. This will be addressed at a later stage as there is the need for expediency in completing the zebra crossing and the relocation of the taxi waiting area by September, when the college opens.
49. The installation of the new zebra crossing and the relocation of the taxi waiting area are interlinked and dependent on the successful relocation of the taxi waiting layby from Station Approach.

Equalities Impact Assessment

50. An equalities impact assessment has been undertaken and a site visit carried out with the representatives of Ashford Access. The Equality Impact Assessment can be found at Appendix 5.
51. The proposed Enabling Works will enhance accessibility.
52. The zebra crossing will aid all members of the public to cross Station Approach in a safer manner instead of the current unofficial crossing to International House at the front end of the taxi waiting area. There will be a purpose built, well lit, clearly marked and enforceable zebra crossing providing a single crossing point for Station Approach. This will aid the movement of pedestrians safely from the station to the Commercial Quarter, the college and the town centre.
53. The two bay taxi rank, with the covered shelter, will remain in its current position, which is near the front of the domestic side of the railway station. Therefore, access to taxis will not be reduced or made more difficult by these proposals.

54. A CCTV camera based system will be installed to relay images of the taxi rank on the Station Forecourt back to a monitor at the front of the taxi waiting layby so that drivers can see when the rank becomes free and drive forward onto it. A back-up system will include a call system for disabled vehicles and other specific vehicles to be called to the taxi rank at the front of the station.
55. The proposals by Southeastern to restrict the area immediately in front of the station to buses and taxis will mean disabled vehicles will be discouraged from using the area immediately outside the station. Southeastern will continue to provide their assisted travel support to those requiring assistance when accessing the station together with the ability for vehicles to drop off passengers with mobility issues remaining on the international side. It is worth noting that the distance from the disabled parking bays to the station is a few metres and passengers have further to navigate once they are inside the station to access the platforms.

Other Options Considered

56. Not carrying out the Enabling Works would not deliver the benefits outlined in this report.
57. The Council does not own or manage the Station Forecourt or the car parks either side of the Station. These areas are private property and are managed by SE.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

58. The Enabling Works will improve pedestrian connectivity between the Stour Centre Car Park, the Commercial Quarter, the college and the railway station.
59. A relocation of the taxi waiting area will reduce vehicle congestion on Station Approach and improve vehicle flows through the Station Forecourt at peak times.
60. The capacity of the taxi waiting area will increase from eight vehicles to 17.

Next Steps in Process

61. A planning application was submitted on 10 May 2017 and will be considered by the Planning Committee in July 2017.
62. Following the decision by the Cabinet, contracts would be agreed and work would commence in July 2017.

Conclusion

63. The Enabling Works are proposed to realise the benefits outlined in above. These works are a critical component to the successful delivery of the Commercial Quarter.

Portfolio Holders Views

64. Councillor Brad Bradford (Health, Parking and Community Safety): “These are vital works that will significantly improve the appearance, safety, accessibility and free flow of traffic. They have been developed following extensive consultation and they have my full support. I would like to particularly thank Southeastern for their support in developing and subsequent implementation of the project.
65. Councillor Neil Shorter (Finance and IT): “This scheme of works will transform both the practical and visual frontage of the town’s railway station. Safer crossing of a busy road, guiding commuters and visitors towards the commercial quarter and the college, will improve the feel of a smart place to both work and enjoy the new and existing facilities of Ashford.

The taxi rank operations will operate efficiently whilst not impinging on the visual aspect of this gateway to the town. I fully support the report and its recommendations.

Contact and Email

66. James Hann - james.hann@ashford.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Commercial Quarter Enabling Works Location Plan

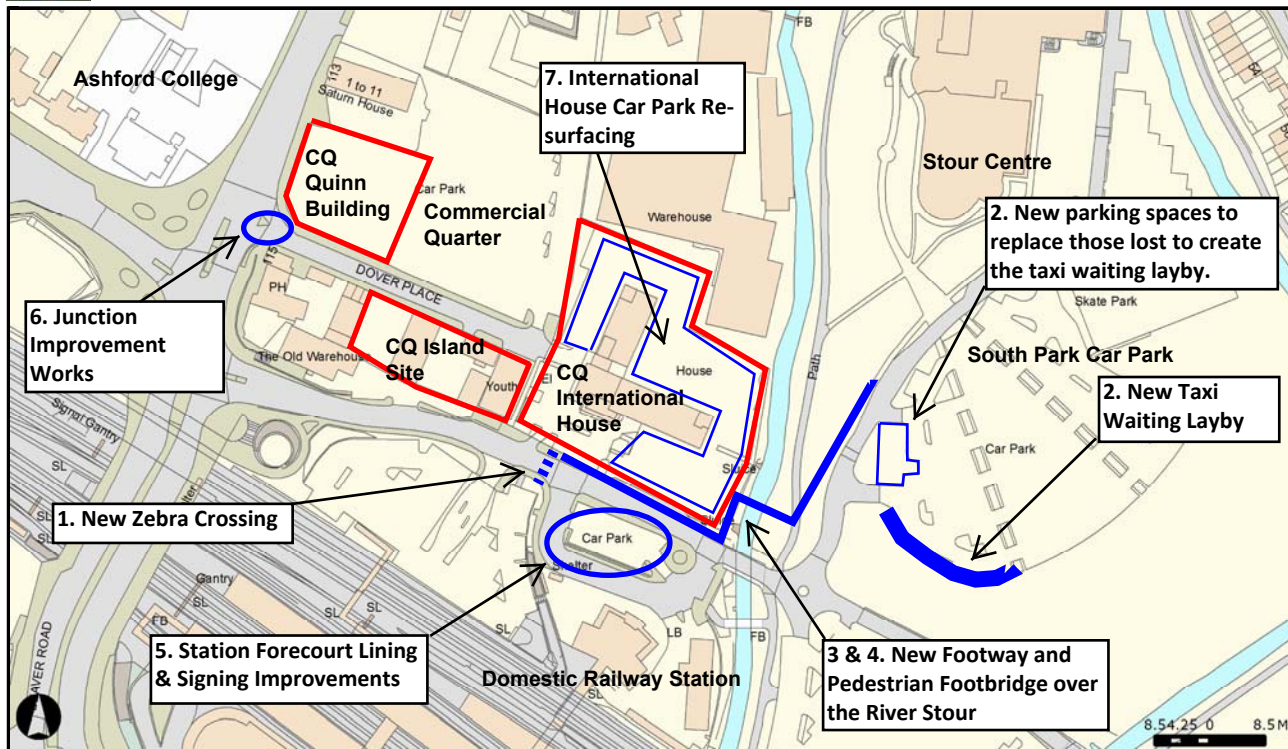
Appendix 2: Proposed taxi waiting area and the proposed circulation route for taxis.

Appendix 3: Summary of consultation responses

Appendix 4: Revised markings for taxi waiting area to improve accessibility

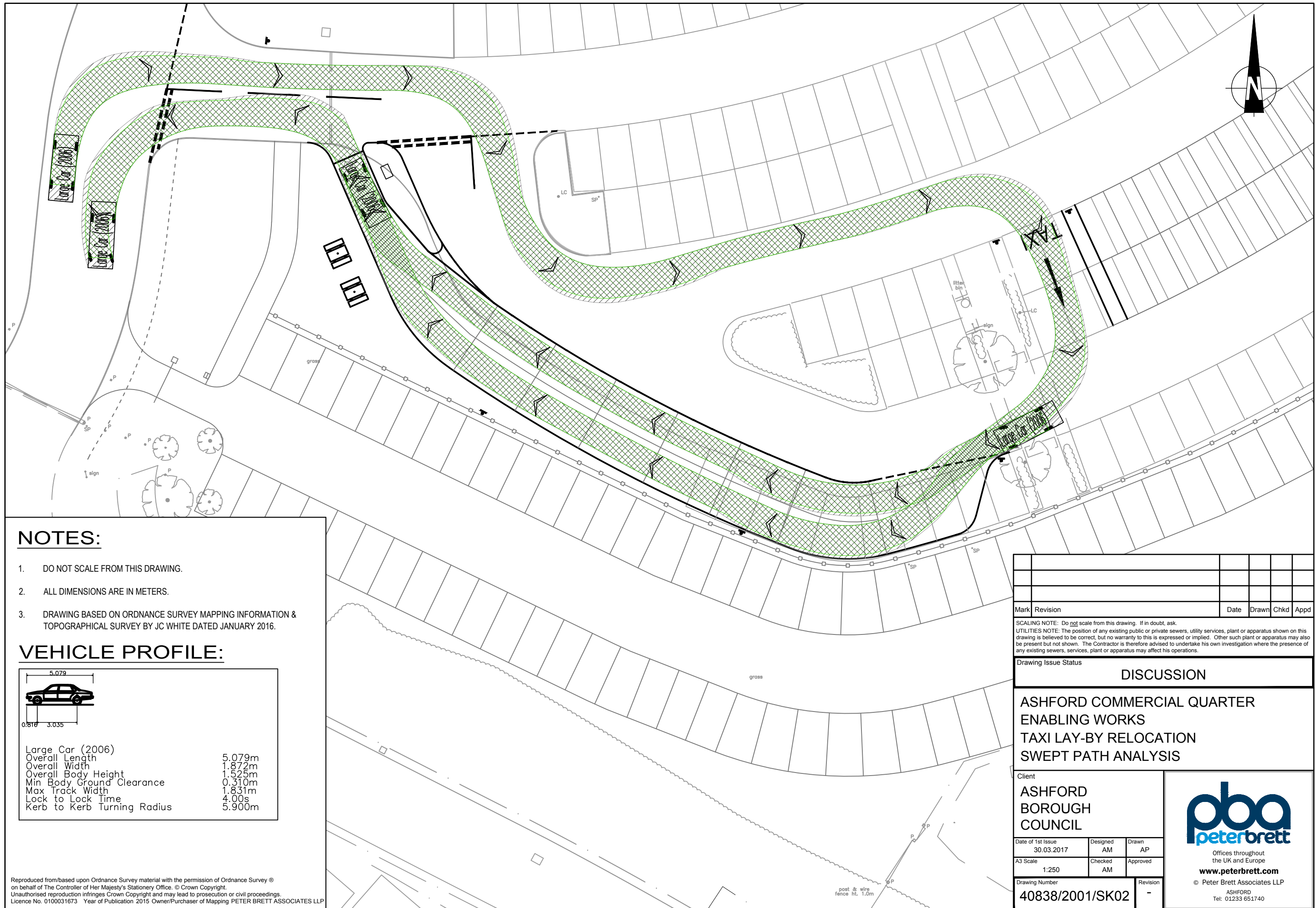
Appendix 5: Equality Impact Assessment

Ashford Commercial Quarter Enabling Works Location Plan



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NOTES:

1. DO NOT SCALE FROM THIS DRAWING.
2. ALL DIMENSIONS ARE IN METERS.
3. DRAWING BASED ON ORDNANCE SURVEY MAPPING INFORMATION & TOPOGRAPHICAL SURVEY BY JC WHITE DATED JANUARY 2016.

VEHICLE PROFILE:

Large Car (2006)	
Overall Length	5.079m
Overall Width	1.872m
Overall Body Height	1.525m
Min Body Ground Clearance	0.310m
Max Track Width	1.831m
Lock to Lock Time	4.00s
Kerb to Kerb Turning Radius	5.900m

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Mark	Revision	Date	Drawn	Chkd	Appd

SCALING NOTE: Do not scale from this drawing. If in doubt, ask.
 UTILITIES NOTE: The position of any existing public or private sewers, utility services, plant or apparatus shown on this drawing is believed to be correct, but no warranty to this is expressed or implied. Other such plant or apparatus may also be present but not shown. The Contractor is therefore advised to undertake his own investigation where the presence of any existing sewers, services, plant or apparatus may affect his operations.

Drawing Issue Status **DISCUSSION**

**ASHFORD COMMERCIAL QUARTER
 ENABLING WORKS
 TAXI LAY-BY RELOCATION
 SWEEP PATH ANALYSIS**

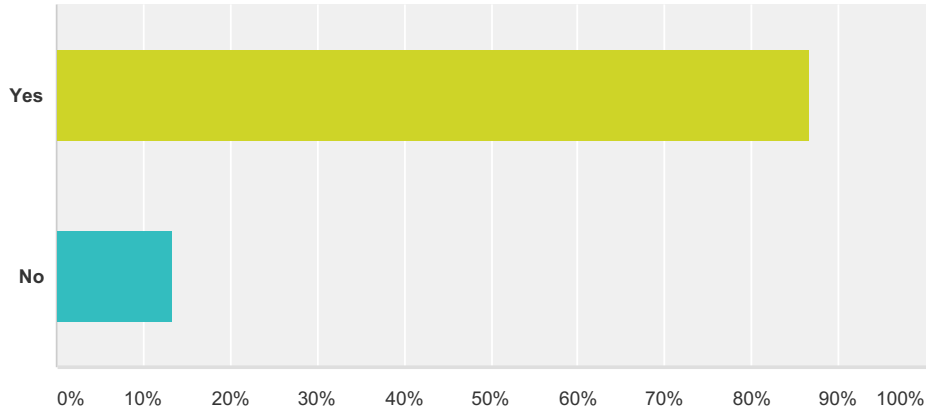
Client
**ASHFORD
 BOROUGH
 COUNCIL**

Date of 1st Issue	Designed	Drawn
30.03.2017	AM	AP
A3 Scale	Checked	Approved
1:250	AM	

Drawing Number	Revision
40838/2001/SK02	-

Q1 Do you agree with the aims of the proposals to reduce congestion and improve pedestrian access? (see previous page for details)

Answered: 75 Skipped: 0

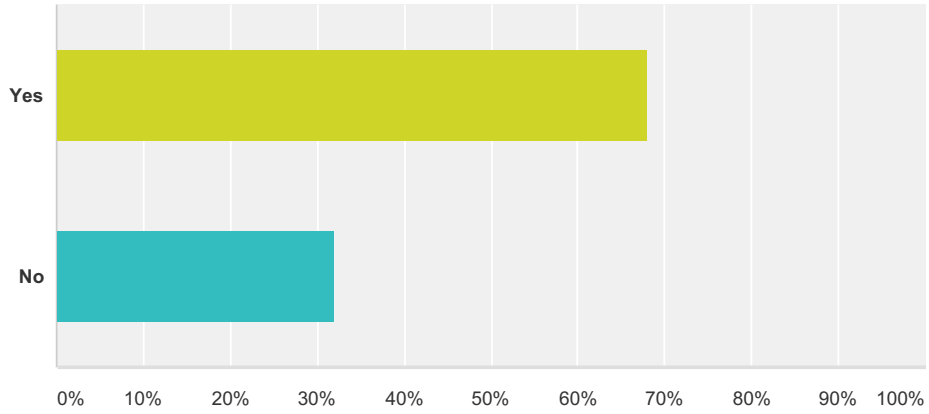


Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	86.67% 65
No	13.33% 10
Total	75

Taxi waiting area survey

Q2 Do you think that the location of the proposed taxi waiting area will support these aims?

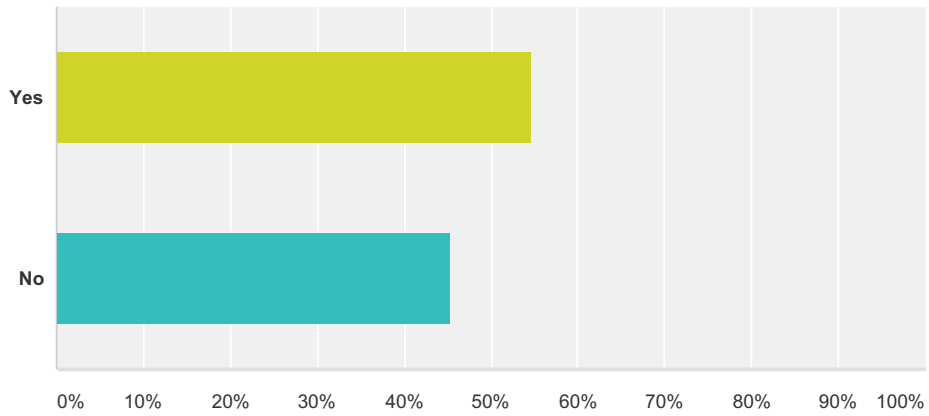
Answered: 75 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	68.00%	51
No	32.00%	24
Total		75

Q3 Do you think that the proposed taxi waiting area layout will work in practice?

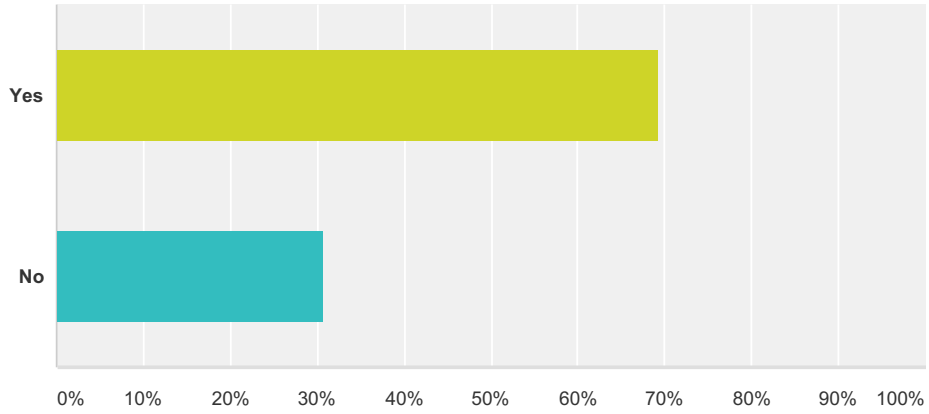
Answered: 75 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	54.67%	41
No	45.33%	34
Total		75

Q4 Do you think a CCTV camera based system is the best solution to inform taxi drivers that the taxi rank is empty?

Answered: 75 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	69.33%	52
No	30.67%	23
Total		75

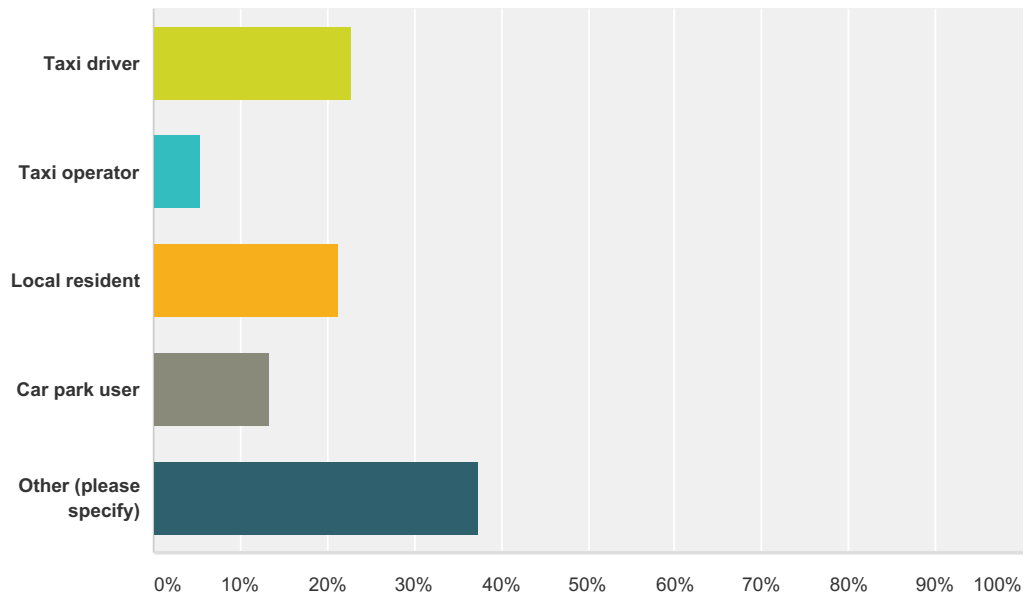
Q5 Do you have any other comments you would like to feed back to us regarding this proposal? If so, please add them to the comment box below.

Answered: 36 Skipped: 39

Taxi waiting area survey

Q6 Finally, could you tell us a bit about you? Are you a;

Answered: 75 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Taxi driver	22.67%	17
Taxi operator	5.33%	4
Local resident	21.33%	16
Car park user	13.33%	10
Other (please specify)	37.33%	28
Total		75

Equality Impact Assessment

1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a document that summarises how the council has had due regard to the public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010) in its decision-making. Although there is no legal duty to produce an EIA, the Council must have **due regard** to the equality duty and an EIA is recognised as the best method of fulfilling that duty. It can assist the Council in making a judgment as to whether a policy or other decision will have unintended negative consequences for certain people and help maximise the positive impacts of policy change. An EIA can lead to one of four consequences:

- (a) No major change – the policy or other decision is robust with no potential for discrimination or adverse impact. Opportunities to promote equality have been taken;
- (b) Adjust the policy or decision to remove barriers or better promote equality as identified in the EIA;
- (c) Continue the policy – if the EIA identifies potential for adverse impact, set out compelling justification for continuing;
- (d) Stop and remove the policy where actual or potential unlawful discrimination is identified.

Public sector equality duty

2. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the council, when exercising public functions, to have due regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (ie tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups).

3. These are known as the three aims of the general equality duty.

Protected characteristics

4. The Equality Act 2010 sets out nine protected characteristics for the purpose of the equality duty:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership*
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

*For marriage and civil partnership, only the first aim of the duty applies in relation to employment.

Due regard

5. Having 'due regard' is about using good equality information and analysis at the right time as part of decision-making procedures.
6. To 'have due regard' means that in making decisions and in its other day-to-day activities the council must consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the general equality duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This can involve:
- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics when these are different from the needs of other people.
 - encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where it is disproportionately low.
7. How much regard is 'due' will depend on the circumstances. The greater the

potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. Examples of functions and decisions likely to engage the duty include: policy decisions, budget decisions, public appointments, service provision, statutory discretion, decisions on individuals, employing staff and procurement of goods and services.

8. In terms of timing:

- Having 'due regard' should be considered at the inception of any decision or proposed policy or service development or change.
- Due regard should be considered throughout development of a decision. Notes shall be taken and kept on file as to how due regard has been had to the equality duty in research, meetings, project teams, consultations etc.
- The completion of the EIA is a way of effectively summarising this and it should inform final decision-making.

Case law principles

9. A number of principles have been established by the courts in relation to the equality duty and due regard:

- Decision-makers in public authorities must be aware of their duty to have 'due regard' to the equality duty and so EIA's must be attached to any relevant committee reports.
- Due regard is fulfilled before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration as well as at the time a decision is taken. Due regard involves a conscious approach and state of mind.
- A public authority cannot satisfy the duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.
- The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.
- The duty is a non-delegable one. The duty will always remain the responsibility of the public authority.
- The duty is a continuing one so that it needs to be considered not only when a

policy, for example, is being developed and agreed but also when it is implemented.

- It is good practice for those exercising public functions to keep an accurate record showing that they have actually considered the general duty and pondered relevant questions. Proper record keeping encourages transparency and will discipline those carrying out the relevant function to undertake the duty conscientiously.
- A public authority will need to consider whether it has sufficient information to assess the effects of the policy, or the way a function is being carried out, on the aims set out in the general equality duty.
- A public authority cannot avoid complying with the duty by claiming that it does not have enough resources to do so.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced helpful guidance on "Meeting the Equality Duty in Policy and Decision-Making" (October 2014). It is available on the following link and report authors should read and follow this when developing or reporting on proposals for policy or service development or change and other decisions likely to engage the equality duty. [Equality Duty in decision-making](#)

Equality Impact Assessment

Lead officer:	James Hann
Decision maker:	Cabinet
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop 	Station Approach
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	13 July 2017
Summary of the proposed decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims and objectives • Key actions • Expected outcomes • Who will be affected and how? • How many people will be affected? 	<p>As one of the Big 8 projects, these proposed works will enhance the Commercial Quarter and facilitate its further development. The zebra crossing and relocation of the taxi waiting area are aiming to achieve the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reduction in vehicle congestion on Station Approach and improvement of vehicle flows through the Station Forecourt at peak times • Improved pedestrian connectivity between the Stour Centre car park, the Commercial Quarter, the college and the railway station <p>It is anticipated that members of the public may be affected by the proposals as they will use the facilities travelling to and from the railway station. Businesses such as tenants of International House and Commercial Quarter, as well the rail, bus and taxi companies.</p>
Information and research: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. • Include sources and key findings. 	<p>Research conducted as the proposals have been developed. Links to wider Commercial Quarter development and Town Centre economic development. Specific research relating to the taxi arrangements included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three months of taxi vehicle observations at the station • Viability and safety studies were conducted and incorporated into the designs • Observations indicate no more than 14 taxis waiting for the majority of the time, with no more than 17 taxis at the busiest time
Consultation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific consultation has occurred on this decision? • What were the results of the consultation? 	<p>Specific consultation as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ashford Taxi Forum, the Joint Transport Board, Quinn Estates (the developer of the Phase 1 office block), Ashford Leisure Trust, Stagecoach, the Ashford Driving Instructors Association and the Southeastern Railway. • Consultation in detail with the taxi trade began in 2016 with discussions at a Taxi Forum in autumn.

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics? • What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the 6 April the proposals to move the taxi waiting area were presented to a Taxi Forum. Drivers and operators were invited to take part in an online consultation • An online consultation was available between 7 and 26 April. • Contact was made with Ward Members, representatives of the Central Ashford Community Forum and the Mill Court management company. • Details of the consultation were emailed to all drivers and operators that the licensing section had contact details for. It was placed on the council's website, advertised by social media and sent to people and organisations that may have particular interest in the proposals, such as Southeastern Railway, Stagecoach and tenants of International House. • The website included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ location plans of the proposed taxi waiting area in the Stour Centre car park ○ detailed plans of the taxi waiting area layout with an indicative vehicle capacity of 17 vehicles ○ a swept path analysis of proposed vehicle movement, detailed information of the proposals ○ a link to a Survey Monkey with a number of questions, including an opportunity to add free text. • Ashford Access were invited to comment on the proposals, but were unable to commit due to a number of volunteers leaving. |
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Responses

- 75 people responded to the consultation
- 21 were taxi drivers or operators, 16 were local residents, 10 were car park users and 28 were "other"
- Over 86% agreed that the aims of the proposals to reduce congestion and improve access
- 68% agreed that the location of the proposed taxi waiting area would support these aims
- 69% thought that a CCTV system was the best solution to inform taxi drivers that the taxi rank was empty
- 54% thought that the proposed taxi waiting area layout would work in practice
- A summary of the responses is included in the report

Issues Raised

- There was concern (primarily by taxi drivers and operators) that a two lane waiting area would cause issues when vehicles parked on the inside wanted to leave the waiting area to attend jobs that are phoned in.
- A further meeting with taxi drivers and operators was held on 22 May to determine how the maximum vehicle capacity of the waiting area could be balanced with operational concerns.
- An option to create 'hatched' bays within the right rank to allow for manoeuvrability from the inside lane was subsequently developed and sent out to drivers and operators.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of a well-designed and properly maintained CCTV system was raised by a number of respondents, along with the need for a back-up system that would include a call system for disabled vehicles and other specific vehicles to be called to the taxi rank at the front of the station. • Other issues raised included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ concerns that customers would need to walk further to hail a taxi (taxi rank is not moving) ○ the system would be open to abuse by unscrupulous drivers ○ changes to the phasing of the traffic lights at the junction with the A2042 would reduce congestion (planned for 2017/2018) 17 proposed spaces were insufficient. • 3 respondents referred to the issue of flooding. This is addressed in the planning application, which was submitted in May 2017. • 14 positive comments received included support for the proposed zebra crossing, welcoming the proposed improvements and agreement that the proposals will help reduce congestion.
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Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics.

When assessing relevance and impact, make it clear who the assessment applies to within the protected characteristic category. For example, a decision may have high relevance for young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men.

Protected characteristic	Relevance to Decision High/Medium/Low/None	Impact of Decision Positive (Major/Minor) Negative (Major/Minor) Neutral
<u>AGE</u>		
Elderly	Low	Positive - minor
Middle age	Low	Neutral
Young adult	Low	Neutral
Children	Low	Positive - minor
<u>DISABILITY</u>		
Physical	Low	Positive – minor
Mental	Low	Positive - minor
Sensory	Low	Positive - minor
<u>GENDER RE-ASSIGNMENT</u>	Low	Neutral

<u>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</u>	Low	Neutral
<u>PREGNANCY/MATERNITY</u>	Low	Neutral
<u>RACE</u>	Low	Neutral
<u>RELIGION OR BELIEF</u>	Low	Neutral
<u>SEX</u>		
Men	Low	Neutral
Women	Low	Neutral
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</u>	Low	Neutral

<p>Mitigating negative impact:</p> <p>Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.</p>	No negative impact
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<p>Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty?</p> <p>Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's Essential Guide, alongside fuller PSED Technical Guidance.</p>	
Aim	Yes/No
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	No
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	No
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	No

<p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above). Advise on whether the proposal meets the aims of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Enabling Works will improve pedestrian connectivity between the Stour Centre car park, the Commercial Quarter, the college and the railway station for all members of our community. The two bay taxi rank, with the covered shelter, will remain where it is near the front of the domestic side of the railway station. There is therefore no impact on taxi customers. In addition to a well-designed and properly maintained CCTV system, a back-up system will be installed that will include a call system for specific vehicles (such as wheelchair accessible vehicles or saloons) so that these
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<p>the equality duty or whether adjustments have been made or need to be made or whether any residual impacts are justified.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation be undertaken and reported?	<p>vehicles can be called to the taxi rank at the front of the station.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The proposals are not considered to have any negative impacts on equality and will aid access to the station and road safety.
<p>EIA completion date:</p>	<p>23 June 2017</p>