

Agenda Item No:

Report To: Joint Transportation Board

Date of Meeting: 7 June 2022

Report Title: Installation of limited waiting bays outside Royal Mail Delivery Office, Tannery Lane, Ashford

Report Author: Alison Oates – Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager
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Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Peter Feacey

Portfolio Holder for: Community Safety and Wellbeing



Summary: A petition has been submitted to the Joint Transportation Board calling for vehicular waiting spaces outside the Royal Mail Delivery Office, Tannery Lane, Ashford.

This report details the current position concerning parking within this area alongside several options available to address the request within the petition.

Key Decision: NO

Significantly Affected Wards: Victoria Ward

Recommendations: **The Board is recommended to:-**

- I. Support the introduction of limited waiting bays outside the Royal Mail Delivery Office, Tannery Lane, Ashford subject to the outcome of a road safety audit and the development of a detailed scheme.**
- II. Support officers to progress implementation of a suitable scheme following required statutory process, subject to the findings of the road safety audit.**

Financial Implications: The estimated cost for the full process is £5820 This cost would be borne by Ashford Borough Council.

Exempt from Publication: NO

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Introduction and Background

1. A petition was submitted by Mrs Roberts to the Joint Transportation Board (JTB) on 1 March 2022 requesting parking provision be made outside the Royal Mail Delivery Office in Tannery Lane, Ashford. It initially started as an on-line petition prior to being presented to the JTB. Whilst the version of the petition that was submitted contains over 3,000 signatures, 2,172 are classed as 'valid' under the provisions of the Ashford Borough Council Petitions Scheme i.e. people who "live or work in the Borough". In presenting the petition at JTB Mrs Roberts gave the following supporting statement:

2. *I feel that there has been a long-standing issue over many years for the need of temporary vehicular waiting bays outside the Sorting Office in Tannery Lane. As you will probably know, there are double yellow lines on the road outside the building and people are not supposed to park there. Most times, I am able to walk to make my collections but occasionally take the car if I'm in a rush which I found with my working schedule in the run up to Christmas. Whilst doing so I witnessed several other vehicles also waiting and about 6 people queuing outside to make their collections.*

I have had some conversations with other customers and Royal Mail employees and came to believe that there is a valid need for 3 official 15 to 20 minute waiting bays outside the Sorting Office. Currently many a customer nervously leave their vehicle there. Some are met by traffic wardens and are issued parking tickets. This can be very upsetting for a brief visit to collect missed deliveries.

To gauge the public feeling on this I instigated a petition at the beginning of January which you will see has now gained over 3000 signatures and many comments of support and the feeling is strong.

There are many people from all walks of life within the community who at some time need to collect or deliver post and parcels and require a brief 5 minute stop off for their vehicle while they do so. The car parks in the town are some distance and not conducive for those with mobility or health issues who can't walk far including elderly customers or people working busy shifts and schedules with little time to spare, for those managing children or for people carrying heavy parcels to or from the Sorting Office. Having to pay for parking to make collections also seems an unfair charge to ask the public to make to receive their mail.

My feeling, and evidently the public feeling, is that there is now a strong need for a change to the current restrictions. This area of road is already well used for waiting and has been so for many years. Provision of vehicular waiting spaces in this area is a public need and would highly benefit the local community so we would appreciate your serious consideration of this matter.

3. The relevant agencies, namely Kent County Council (KCC) and Ashford Borough Council (subsequently referred to as the council), have been approached on previous occasions to install limited waiting bays outside the Royal Mail Delivery Office in Tannery Lane. This became an issue after the Royal Mail decided to stop their customers parking within the Delivery Office site. These requests were previously refused on the grounds of safety, hence, the existence of Double Yellow Lines (DYLs).
4. It is important to note that DYLs allow those displaying a valid blue badge or those undertaking genuine loading activity (i.e. heavy bulky goods) to legally park immediately outside the Delivery Office. In short, the current arrangements allow those with the greatest need to park near the Delivery Office. Penalty charge notices are only issued to those who do not meet either criteria.
5. If the limited waiting bays are introduced blue badge holders or those undertaking genuine loading activity may be unable to park outside and therefore could be disadvantaged.
6. The Delivery Office has the advantage of being located near to four public car parks that are within easy walking distance for those who do not have mobility issues and who are not delivering or collecting heavy or cumbersome items. It is possible to park, without charge, for 15 minutes outside the Civic Centre or for a minimum of 60p for 30 minutes of the other nearby car parks i.e. when charging periods are in operation.
 - It takes 5 minutes to walk to the Civic Centre Car Park.
 - It takes 3 minutes to walk to Dover Place Car Park.
 - It takes 3 minutes to walk to Vicarage Lane Car Park.
 - It takes 3 minutes to Station Road Car Park.
7. There is a notice outside the Delivery Office informing their customers that there is already a 15-minute waiting area outside the Civic Centre and that Dover Place car park is the closest parking option.
8. The majority of local people are aware that Civil Enforcement officers (CEOs) are stationed in the Civic Centre at end of the Road. When the CEOs walk out of the council building, they are completely transparent, so motorists have a choice to seek alternative parking arrangements that will avoid issuance of a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN).
9. This request will support the business needs of Royal Mail and we need be clear that a precedent is not being set by changing restrictions to suit a local business as other businesses may make similar requests which we would find difficult to reject.

Proposal

10. KCC has advised that the request to install these bays is not believed to be a current movement or safety problem that can be addressed through their highways interventions. Therefore, it falls to the council to recommend the relevant action and seek funds to make any desired changes to any on-street parking restrictions.

11. The level of traffic using Tannery Lane is a consideration. It is noted that usage has decreased over recent years as a consequence of Kent Wool Growers closing and access to the Stour Centre from Station Approach. The reduction in use means that two limited waiting bays could potentially be introduced.
12. The above notwithstanding, the now vacant KWG site next to the Delivery Office is due to be developed and this would result in increased traffic on Tannery Lane. These factors need to be considered part of any future application TRO process.
13. In developing a scheme, it will be necessary to check that safety is not compromised as well as ensuring that access for HGVs to the Delivery Office is not a problem. A road safety audit would ensure that there are no safety concerns associated with introducing limited parking bays. The estimated cost of this would be £2920. Once this has been received and if deemed safe to continue, then an application to amend the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) would be required. The required statutory process would be followed including publicising the proposed changes, a period of consultation, consideration any objections before the final decision to implement the scheme or not. The cost of this process is currently £2,500.
14. If the TRO was amended then the lining in the road would need to be amended alongside the installation of additional signage. The estimated cost of these works is £400.

Consultation Planned or Undertaken

15. The consultation would follow the requirements as per the statutory process detailed in paragraph 13.

Other Options Considered

16. Officers have asked Royal Mail previously to reconsider their decision and to once again allow their customers to park on their site. Unfortunately, they have stated that they are unable to support this request as the site is fully utilised for Royal Mail vehicles (including HGVs) and have recently relocated their staff parking to free up more space on the site.
17. The Council's Corporate Property Team are in contact with the owners of the KWG site to explore the possibility of providing parking for use by Royal Mail customers on their land, however, as this is a secured site for development, this is not a viable option.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

18. There is clearly significant public support for the introduction of limited waiting bays and currently there are no other obvious solutions. The other options considered and outlined above are not open to us to pursue. The option recommended will enable the safety issues to be checked and the necessary statutory process can then be followed towards introducing the desired waiting bays.

Next Steps in Process

19. Commission road safety audit as detailed in paragraph 10.
20. Review result from audit in conjunction with KCC. If no safety or movement concerns then TRO amendment process to commence by the Council.

Conclusion

21. The concerns raised by the petitioners about the effects of being unable to park outside the Delivery Office are understandable. However, the existing DYLS do allow those most at need to park immediately outside and deliver or collect their parcels. Also, the Council has provided adequate free parking within walking distance of the Delivery Office.
22. KCC has stated that they have no safety or movement concerns were a limited number of bays to be provided. In these circumstances, the petition's aims could therefore be considered through the statutory TRO process, which would allow consultation with relevant stakeholders such as KCC, the Police, neighbouring businesses and the public.

Contact and Email

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