

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Appendix 1

EXECUTIVE REPORT

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE DECISION

Wilson Street – Traffic Management Issues

Executive Member for Community Protection: Councillor Julia Rostron

Director of Environment: Mike Robinson

12 April 2011

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To consider options to address the issues in relation to late night traffic congestion at Wilson Street and provide direction on the way forward.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

2. That the Executive Member considers the views expressed by the Quality Taxi Partnership meeting in relation to the options for Wilson Street.
3. That the Executive Member approves, as a first option to tackle the late night congestion issues the development of proposals for taxi marshalls in the Wilson Street location.

IF THIS IS A KEY DECISION WHICH KEY DECISION TEST APPLIES?

4. It is over the financial threshold (£75,000)
It has a significant impact on 2 or more wards
Non Key

DECISION IMPLEMENTATION DEADLINE

5. For the purposes of the scrutiny call in procedure this report is

Non-urgent
Urgent report

BACKGROUND AND EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

6. The stretch of Wilson Street between Albert Road and Linthorpe Mews can be extremely congested at peak times, generally between 1am and 4am on Friday and Saturday mornings. This congestion primarily arises from the large number of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles in this location. There are four late night take away premises on Wilson Street which

attract the public at the end of their night out. In December 2010, a private hire operator, Boro Cars were granted a licence to operate a booking office in this location.

7. Concerns had been expressed by both the Police and the taxi trade in relation to the congestion in this, and other town centre locations, and in response to this in December 2009, Transportation Planning International (TPI) were commissioned by the Council to undertake a review of the town centre night time traffic management arrangements. It was proposed that the issue in relation to Wilson Street would be considered in conjunction with other town centre late night hot spot locations and traffic management issues.
8. In August 2010, following extensive surveys and consultation with key stakeholders, TPI produced their final report with their findings. In relation to Wilson Street, they reported that they had been unable to establish a consensus view on one way forward to address the Wilson Street issues. As a result of this, they proposed three options to be piloted and evaluated in order to conclude the best way forward.
9. The TPI report was presented to the Executive on 9 November, 2010. It was decided by the Executive that all taxi issues, including the report's recommendations, should be developed and progressed through a Quality Taxi Partnership which would be established with representatives from the taxi trade and other interested parties. Recommendations arising from this would be reported to the Executive Member for approval.
10. The first meeting of Quality Taxi Partnership (QTP) was held in December 2010. At this meeting it was proposed by the attendees that the Wilson Street issue should be the priority of the next QTP meeting which was held in February 2011.
11. It should be noted that the QTP was in its formative stage and further work would be required to bring the meeting together to operate as a functioning partnership: One private hire operator had stated that they were representing only themselves at the QTP meeting and not the views of the private hire trade. The Hackney Carriage Association stated that they wished to participate in the discussions regarding taxi issues, however they did not intend to "sign up" to the QTP. In essence; though there have been meetings of interested parties, there is not a fully functioning "partnership".
12. The QTP had established that the main issue which needed to be addressed in relation to Wilson Street was the traffic congestion.
13. Appendix 1 shows the detailed options proposed in the TPI report in relation to Wilson Street and a possible staged pilot approach. In summary the options are :
 - Option 1: Full closure of Wilson Street after the last late night bus and up to 04.00 am;
 - Option 2: Wilson Street is retained operating as a two-way road
One rank along Wilson Street (to be decided by the QTP) is retained;
 - Option 3: Wilson Street operating under a one-way system (east – west), after the last late night bus and up to 04.00 am;
One rank along Wilson Street (to be decided by the QTP) is retained;

14. These options were considered by the representatives at the QTP meeting in February, 2011.
15. There was general agreement that option 1, the full closure of Wilson Street, should not be progressed.
16. There was no agreement in relation to the remaining two options. In summary, the following views were stated by the representatives at the meeting:

Boro Cars – Option 2 or 3 should be considered, with the taxi rank outside the Boro Cars booking office removed. Supported taxi marshalls and additional enforcement. The views of the Executive should be considered.

Hackney Carriage Association – Retain Wilson Street as it currently is. Employ taxi marshalls and review in 6 months.

Middlesbrough Police. Option 2 is not radical enough, option 3 may be difficult and expensive. Suggests a trial of both options 2 and 3.

Middlesbrough Council Transportation and Design - Option 3 is easy to implement on paper may be difficult to implement practically due to the temporary nature of the proposed one way system.

Town Centre Company - Undecided at this time but clear that to do nothing is not an option.

Marton Cars – Marshalling is costly and concern over the possible impact on fees (Ian Blades). Wilson Street should be kept open but with provision for private hire pick up/ drop offs.

17. Considering the above views, taxi marshalls are the only proposal where there is some degree of agreement. The use of taxi marshalls, and also additional enforcement, were considered by TPI to be integral to the success of all three options they proposed. The use of taxi marshalls were also proposed by TPI for other night time hot spot locations in the town centre. Changes to the road layout and removal of ranks in isolation are unlikely to reduce the congestion arising from the volume of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles operating in this location. Changes to the traffic arrangements are not likely to reduce the public demand for taxis in the Wilson Street location. Employing taxi marshalls could be considered as the first option to be trialled to address the Wilson Street congestion. Apart from the full closure of Wilson Street, marshalls are seen as the best option without the need for legal orders and disrupting other traffic. The effect that they have on the current congestion should inform the next stage in implementing TPI.
18. The role of the taxi marshalls requires further development, however it is expected that they would ensure hackney carriage and private hire vehicles operated within an agreed set of guidelines, to direct the public to locations for accessing hackney carriages, directing the public to locations for private hire pick ups. Paramount to the success of any of the options for Wilson Street is the co-operation of both the hackney carriage drivers and private hire operators and drivers in following set rules in relation to their operation.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

19. An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out in due course as part of the process for developing the proposals for taxi marshalls.

OPTION APPRAISAL/RISK ASSESSMENT

20. The primary concern for the Licensing regime is that of public safety. Any changes to traffic management at Wilson Street should be centred around an outcome which will improve and maintain the safety of the travelling public.
21. To do nothing in relation to Wilson Street is not recommended.
22. There is no agreement by attendees of the QTP on how to progress with options 2 or 3. All options will require the deployment of taxi marshalls and additional enforcement may also be required to achieve the overall outcome of reducing congestion in this location. It would be necessary to establish a set of rules in relation to when hackney carriages and private hire vehicles are operating on Wilson Street and the co-operation and support of the trade in following these rules will be also necessary to ensure that the taxi marshalls can work effectively. If one or more ranks were removed then this may have no effect on the net volume of taxi traffic.
23. It is proposed that the first option to be progressed should be the development of proposals in relation to taxi marshalls for Wilson Street.
24. It is proposed that the impact of the taxi marshalls operating in this location would be piloted over a set period of time. The results of the evaluation would inform further proposals to implement T.P.I.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

25. **Financial** - There are financial implications to the Council for utilising taxi marshalls. The costs involved will be met by licence fees paid by the taxi trade and the taxi licensing account is ring-fenced. It is proposed that taxi marshalls would be provided at peak times which would generally be late night/early morning Friday and Saturday. They may also be required to work on other special holidays, as necessary. Further developmental work on the marshall's remit is required before accurate costings can be obtained, and a procurement process may be required if a taxi marshall service is to be commissioned vying for the same customer. The purpose of taxi marshalls would be to ensure conformity with traffic regulations, eg, preventing the haphazard parking that sometimes occurs, and the consequent tensions that arise.
26. **Ward Implications** – Wilson Street is located in the Middlehaven ward.
27. **Legal Implications** – Under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 the local authority may appoint ranks for hackney carriages on the public highway, or any private land with the consent of the land owner. It can also specify the number of hackney carriages permitted at the stand. The local authority must also follow a legal notice process to remove an officially appointed rank.

28. Under Section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, Highway Authorities have a duty *"...to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians)"*. Under Section 16 of the Traffic Management Act 2004, Highway Authorities have a duty *"...to manage their road network with a view to...securing the expeditious movement of traffic"*.
29. These statutory duties require Middlesbrough Council, as the Highway Authority, to take appropriate action to address the situation on Wilson Street to ensure that, as far as is practicable, those using it at any time of the day are able to do so safely and with the minimum of delay.

RECOMMENDATIONS

30. That the Executive Member considers the views of the Quality Taxi Partnership meeting in relation to the options for Wilson Street.
31. That the Executive Member approves, as a first option to tackle the late night congestion issues, the development of proposals for taxi marshalls in the Wilson Street location and that these proposals be the subject of a further report within three months.

REASONS

32. In order to address the concerns in relation to public safety arising from the congestion at peak times in this location, the local authority consider that action is necessary to improve traffic management in the Wilson Street location. Officers have sought the views of stakeholders through the Quality Taxi Partnership and have not achieved agreement in relation to the options proposed in the TPI report. Taxi marshalls are the only proposal that both parties agree on and therefore, as a first option the development of a proposal for taxi marshalls should be developed and evaluated in the Wilson Street location for a set period of time.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

33. T.P.I Report.

AUTHOR: Judith Hedgley
TEL NO: 728215

Address:

Website: <http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk>

Appendix 1.

TPI Report's comments and options for Wilson Street. (The full report is available on the Middlesbrough Council's website or from the Licensing office)

Extensive discussions have taken place regarding Wilson Street (west of its junction with Albert Road). Wilson Street is problematical in terms of congestion, vehicle conflict, pedestrian – vehicle conflict and traffic management.

5.54 Three options were identified for Wilson Street as listed in Tables 5.9 - 5.11. (In the full report) These tables also outline the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

Option 1 - Closure of Wilson Street

Benefits	Disadvantages
<p>1. Removal of traffic and pedestrian conflicts</p> <p>2. Creation of pedestrian area</p> <p>3. Reinforces the creation of super ranks</p> <p>4. Public order</p> <p>5. Increased travel distance resulting in increased fares.</p>	<p>1. Accessibility issues for existing businesses.</p> <p>2. Potential transfer of problem from Wilson Street to other areas (Albert Road) if no associated measures are proposed – super ranks, increase in parking opportunities on Albert Road, encourage use of Buxton Street car park as a business car park, QTP, taxi Marshall's etc.</p> <p>3. Longer travel distances for taxis and other traffic:</p> <p>Vehicles wishing to access the B1272 Hartington Road / B6541 junction travel a distance of 0.74km (1.19miles) from Dundas Mews along Wilson Street to the junction. If Wilson Street is closed the travel distance between the super rank at Exchange Square is increased to 1.26km (2.02miles). Difference = 0.83miles</p> <p>Costs: Diesel – running cost per mile 16.04p based on a car costing £12k - £16k. Petrol – running cost per mile 18.33p based on a car costing £12k - £14k. (Source: AA June 2010)</p> <p>Increase in cost per trip: Diesel : 13.31p; Petrol: 15.21p</p> <p>Other routes are not affected.</p> <p>Additional distance travelled = increase in tariff.</p> <p>4. Closure needs to be manually managed resulting in manpower costs.</p> <p>5. Removal of a town centre access/exit route and implications for late night buses.</p> <p>6. Transfer of traffic onto Albert Road creating</p>

	<p>further conflicts.</p> <p>7. Albert Road / Wilson Street junction could become a drop-off pick up point creating safety issues.</p>
--	--

Table 5.9 Benefits and disadvantages associated with closure of Wilson Street

Option 2 - Retention of Wilson Street

Benefits	Disadvantages
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ranks relocated to Exchange Square reducing HC and PHV conflicts 2. Access to business retained 3. Town centre vehicle dispersal routes remain unaffected 4. No additional outlay of costs to operate the closure 5. Reduces traffic flows along Albert Road 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pedestrian / traffic conflict would remain 2. Potential for HC and PHV conflict would still exist albeit in a reduced form

Table 5.10 Benefits and disadvantages associated with retention of Wilson Street (two-way)

Option 3 - Wilson Street (One – Way east to west)

Benefits	Disadvantages
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ranks relocated to Exchange Square reducing HC and PHV conflicts 2. Management of traffic on Wilson Street 3. Out of town taxi journeys remain unaffected 4. Reduced traffic / pedestrian conflict 5. Businesses retain access 6. Reduces traffic flows along Albert Road and potential pick up, drop off within the Albert Road / Wilson Street junction. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An element of pedestrian / traffic conflict would remain 2. Manpower will be required to enforce the one-way system 3. Removal of town centre exit route and implications for late night buses (one way)

7. Opposing traffic flows are removed from Wilson Street.	
8. Pedestrian safety is enhanced as a result of one-way traffic flows	

Table 5.11 Benefits and disadvantages associated with retention of Wilson Street (one-way)

5.55 Each option for Wilson Street offers different benefits and disadvantages with option 1 – full closure tending to offer the greatest impact on traffic management issues and therefore being that favoured by those responsible for this (the Council, the Police) and option 2 – retention tending to offer the greatest flexibility for taxi operations and therefore being that favoured by taxi operators. In seeking to maintain the principle of balancing the interests of all it is recommended that a three stage trial is undertaken to establish which scheme works the best for Wilson Street. The trial, proposed for Friday and Saturday nights only, is outlined as follows:

5.56 Stage 1

- Wilson Street is retained operating as a two-way road
- One rank along Wilson Street (to be decided by the QTP) is retained;
- All other recommendations are implemented prior to the commencement of the trial;
- The trial is undertaken over a period of three months and is monitored, based on criteria agreed between all stakeholders, through the QTP.
- The trial is reviewed. If it is considered to be successful based on the criteria set the recommendation is that Wilson Street is retained as a two-way road.

5.57 Stage 2

If Stage 1 proves to be unsuccessful a trial is to be undertaken on the basis of:

- Wilson Street operating under a one-way system (east – west), after the last late night bus and up to 04.00 am;
- The trial is undertaken over a period of three months and is monitored based on criteria agreed between all stakeholders, through the QTP.
- The trial is reviewed. If it is considered to be successful based on the criteria set the recommendation is that Wilson Street is retained as a one-way road during the times proposed.

Prior to the commencement of this trial measures will need to be identified and implemented relating to emergency vehicles and existing business access (subject to consultation to define requirements), form of closure, road signing scheme and a public awareness campaign is undertaken to inform road users and businesses.

5.58 Stage 3

If Stage 2 proves to be unsuccessful a trial is to be undertaken on the basis of:

- Full closure of Wilson Street after the last late night bus and up to 04.00 am;

- The trial is undertaken over a period of three months and is monitored, based on criteria agreed between all stakeholders, through the QTP.
- The trial period is reviewed. If the trial is considered to be successful based on the criteria set the recommendation is that Wilson Street is closed on a permanent basis during the times proposed.

Prior to the commencement of this trial measures will need to be identified and implemented relating to emergency vehicles, buses and existing business access (subject to consultation to define requirements), form of closure, road signing scheme, provision of turning facilities at the western closure point and a public awareness campaign is undertaken to inform road users, bus users and businesses.

5.59 **Stage 4**

If Stage 4 proves to be unsuccessful the results of each stage should be revisited and reviewed to establish which trial proved the most successful and it is recommended that this option is the one implemented from there-on.