
ROCHFORD TOWN CENTRE ENHANCEMENT FURTHER ISSUES - TAXI RANK AND HORSE TROUGH

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' agreement to an alteration to the provision of taxi parking in the Market Square and to arrangements for the return of the horse trough.

2 TAXI RANK LAYOUT

- 2.1 The final layout for the Town Centre Enhancement Scheme (See Appendix 1) includes provision for a three space taxi rank. However, the taxi trade in the Town, whilst expressing their concerns about the reduction from six to three spaces, have also raised important concerns over health & safety issues.
- 2.2 Increasingly, as Members are aware, the taxi trade in the District is making more use of vehicles that are specially converted to allow wheelchair access. These taxis are usually based on van type vehicles and the side entrance doors are positioned on the nearside for obvious reasons. However, the position of the taxi rank on the South side of the central island means that the ramps would need to be positioned in the highway and that customers would necessarily be put in some danger when entering or leaving the vehicle. It must also be borne in mind that adapted vehicles of this type will be used more and more frequently once the taxi scheme replacing Dial a Ride comes into operation.
- 2.3 In order to overcome this problem, it is suggested that the two spaces (15 & 16) shown on the North side of the central island, be designated as a taxi rank in addition to the three space rank on the other side of the island. Whilst this change would result in the loss of two car parking spaces, it is considered that the resultant benefits would more than outweigh this loss. Adapted taxis in particular would be able to make use of this space to enable customers to exit from taxis directly onto the central island: a positive safety benefit.
- 2.4 The use of this space for a taxi rank raises two further issues. Firstly, these spaces would not be available for use on Market day and, secondly, they would be restricted for a period of time in December and January when the Christmas lights and tree are in place. However, the taxi trade has indicated that they would be happy to accept these limitations.

3 HORSE TROUGH

- 3.1 Investigations have confirmed that the original horse trough from the Market Square, which is currently sited in Hockley Woods, is in a good state of repair and therefore there is no reason why this cannot be moved back to Rochford. It is understood that the trough can be moved by the contractors as part of the enhancement scheme works.
- 3.2 The ideal location for the trough in the Square would, of course, be as close to its original location as possible. This would mean looking for a position somewhere on the central island. However, the position of any street furniture on the island must avoid any conflict with Market stalls. Therefore, it is concluded that it would not be possible to place the trough on the island. In addition, a local resident has offered to sponsor the provision of a replica town pump to be placed next to the trough. The result is that the space required for both trough and pump is quite considerable.
- 3.3 As an alternative to the central island, it is suggested that the trough and replica pump could be positioned on the new paved area outside Nos. 6 & 8 West Street. (See Appendix 1). It is considered that visually the trough and pump would create a very attractive feature in the street scene.

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The conversion of the two car parking spaces on the North side of the central island into a taxi rank would have very considerable benefits for the safety of passengers entering and exiting van type disabled taxis.
- 4.2 The return of the horse trough, together with the provision of a replica town pump offered by a local resident, would positively enhance the visual appearance of the Square.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A taxi rank on the North side of the Square would benefit safety for disabled taxi passengers in particular.
- 5.2 The return of the trough and the provision of the replica pump would have a positive visual impact.

6 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) That the layout of the Enhancement Scheme be modified by changing car parking spaces 15 and 16 into a taxi rank.
- (2) That the Town horse trough be moved from Hockley Woods to the new paved area in front of 6/8 West Street and be placed next to a replica Town pump as outlined in the report.

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APPENDIX 1

