

Appendix D

A review of the implications of introducing disabled parking spaces and a Dial a Ride collection and delivery point in the former covered market area.

Kingfisher Centre – Response to Proposal

In terms of the proposal for disabled parking on the Market Area:

- this is not a suitable use for this area on the basis of traffic movements and conflict with pedestrians moving through the underpass to and from Walter Stranz square.
- There is an excess of provision of disabled parking around Redditch, including open areas for adapted vehicles.
- This appears to work against the highly regarded Mobility Centre provision sited on Car Park 3 at a time when the revenue requirement to sustain this facility is fickle.
- Footfall in and around the Town Centre is currently very sensitive and the proposed disruption would not be welcome, adding more reasons for shoppers to stay away from the town centre.
- Finally, the costs of creating, maintaining, policing and enforcing this facility seem unreasonable in the current financial climate. This will not add any more footfall, simply move it around, reduce business revenue and add running costs.

Needless to affirm – the centre would not be supportive of such a proposal.

Shopmobility & Dial-a-Ride

The dial a ride service already drop customers at the Town Hall and at the back of the post office. These customers are able to walk short distances and visits are specifically for the Town Hall or the Post Office (PO). If mobility is poor then we would normally drop and pick up from Shopmobility so the customer can access all areas of the town centre using the Council's mobility equipment.

The route suggested by Members would not make sense for the service. Dial a Ride buses already have to turn the buses around when dropping off/picking up at the rear of the PO and would not be able to drive in and out safely on the proposed route.

More staff would need to work at Shopmobility if the idea was to have equipment taken down to this area for those using the disabled parking or as a drop off/pick up point. Officers had previously considered a satellite office in one of the empty shops for Shopmobility but would say that the cost would outweigh the demand. It is a very isolated area for more vulnerable customers unless the Council charges for this service to allow us to offer this.

Age UK

Inevitably, Age UK would be pleased to see the old covered market area used for disabled parking, certainly until such time as there is both finance and an appetite to redevelop that area. As well as benefiting many older people, such a use would likely bring about a much greater footfall to that area which, in turn, would enable Age UK to reach a much greater number of older people through the Information Centre in Market Walk.

Age UK would like to see any closures to Fountain Passage be avoided or at least kept to an absolute minimum. Age UK are unconvinced by the arguments about such a closure would increase footfall for Alcester Street businesses and the market traders. Rather, the increased difficulty of reaching Alcester Street from the Kingfisher Centre would deter those likely to undertake non-essential visits AND would decrease the visibility of the Age UK Information Centre to those not using the area to park. It would also make it more difficult for visitors to reach the Town Hall.

Age UK would also appreciate co-ordination and promotion of Dial a Ride pick up/drop off in this area.

Hereford & Worcester Fire Service

The area that has been suggested would not really present any issues regarding access etc. for emergency vehicles or Firefighting activities.

West Mercia Police, Traffic Management

Having looked at the proposals and the attached report it is clear that the area in question is presently in the ownership of Redditch Borough Council and therefore is to all intents and purposes private land. In such circumstances West Mercia Police would not in the normal course of events offer comment on what would effectively become a private car park.

However given that the report also mentions that consideration could be given to the making of an order to include the area in the Civil Parking Enforcement scheme then this does open things up slightly.

There is a potential for pedestrian and vehicle conflict shown in the drawing and I am of the opinion that if a formal stage 1 or 2 safety audit were to be undertaken on the proposals, I am sure that the audit team would require the designer to detail how this safety issue can be satisfactorily addressed. The issue could be possibly resolved by introducing hard physical constraints on the edges of the pedestrian areas to prevention

vehicle intrusion into those areas, with a marked pedestrian crossing across the line of the vehicle entrance/exit path.

If this was a car park within the public highway then I would not support any such proposal until those conflict issues had been resolved safely and satisfactorily.

RBC Cleansing

Officers have looked at the plan provided and have concerns of the proposed area being a “chicken run” for people dropping off and shooting back out onto the market traders / skip area in front of Car Park 2, this is currently quite dangerous as people use it “unofficially” and the speed they come up the ramp is an accident waiting to happen.

We have operatives working in this area as well as vehicles picking up the debris / rubbish picked up from the town centre, also the sweepers fill up with water at the site and visibility is quite restricted due to the amount of vehicles parking in the trader’s area.

The ramp was only designed as an emergency access and is narrow in width with built up walls either side, it is the only pedestrian access from the area and is not only used by RBC staff, it is used by the general public as well as market traders and the traders from the car wash under car park 2.

Officers feel this access needs to be kept as pedestrian and emergency access only and the gate provided should be used at all times to slow any traffic that does use it to a minimum.

North Worcs EDR

Officers share Cleansing Officers’ concerns about the proposed area being a “chicken run” for people dropping off and shooting back out onto the market traders / skip area in front of car park 2 and the “accident waiting to happen”.

Similarly, I agree that it is clear that the ramp was only designed as an emergency access and is narrow in width with built up walls either side and feel this access needs to be kept as pedestrian and emergency access only and the gate provided should be used at all times to slow any traffic that does use it to a minimum.

RBC Planning Policy

The *Borough of Redditch Local Plan 3* has designated the former covered market area as a site that is officially located within the town centre and within what is referred to as the Retail Core, or the primary retail area in the town. All areas that are designated as part of the Retail Core are protected by a local planning policy, *Policy E (TCR).5 Retail Core*. This policy discourages use of

Retail Core areas for non-retail uses. There are also plans to redevelop large parts of Redditch town centre over the next few years, as detailed in the *Redditch Town Centre Strategy*. As part of this process the former covered market area has been identified as an appropriate location for a mixed use development, which would entail a significant element of retail expansion. Redditch Town Centre has limited scope for retail expansion with regards to land available; the redundant market area site is one of the best opportunities available for retail allocation. Not making retail allocations thus means we are not in conformity with planning policy as we are not meeting the retail need as set out in the forthcoming Local Plan No.4.

Summary

It is clear from the stakeholder feedback above that the majority view is that disabled parking spaces and a dial a ride drop off point are not supported. Officers would therefore ask the Committee to resolve that no further action be taken on this matter.