

Licensing Committee

Monday, 27 January 2020

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Salman Akbar (Chair), Councillor Michael Chalk (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Joanne Beecham, Brandon Clayton, Andrew Fry, Julian Grubb, Ann Isherwood, Yvonne Smith and Mark Shurmer

Also Present:

Officers:

Dave Etheridge and Vanessa Brown

Committee Services Officer:

Sarah Sellers

16. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pattie Hill and Gareth Prosser. Councillor Mark Shurmer attended as substitute for Councillor Hill.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

18. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the Minutes of the Licensing Committee held on 4th November 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

19. PUBLIC SPEAKING

Councillor Greg Chance (Central Ward) and Mr Imran Altaf from the Redditch Taxi Association addressed the Committee under the Council's Public Speaking Rules.

20. REQUIREMENT OF LICENSED DRIVERS TO UNDERTAKE A DRIVING ASSESSMENT EVERY THREE YEARS

Members received a report asking them to consider whether or not to undertake a consultation exercise regarding removal of the current requirement for licensed drivers to undertake a practical driving assessment every three years.

The Senior Practitioner (Licensing) (SPL), Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) presented the report and explained that in November 2017 Licensing Committee had resolved to introduce a requirement that holders of drivers licences must undertake refresher training in disability awareness and must pass a driving assessment test at least every three years.

This requirement was formally introduced as policy from December 2017. It was noted that the licensed trade had consistently challenged the policy on the grounds that they believed it to be disproportionate and unreasonable.

The issue had been raised by licence holders at the Taxi Liaison Forum held in September 2019, which had led to the issue being added to the work programme for Licensing Committee.

The proposal before Members was to carry out a consultation exercise on removing the requirement for the three yearly driving assessment. Officers were not proposing to consult on the requirement to undertake disability awareness training which would remain in force.

In response to questions from Members the SPL clarified that:-

- The policy was introduced following the outcome of an Overview and Scrutiny exercise looking at access to taxis for passengers with disabilities.
- Redditch was the only District Council in Worcestershire to require its licenced drivers to carry out three yearly driving assessments.
- Consultation would be required for any change of policy, and the consultees would include the licensed trade, relevant stakeholders and the public.

- The outcome of the consultation would be likely to be reported back to Licensing Committee in July 2020
- In the meantime, WRS were taking the stance that the earliest any drivers would have to take a driving assessment would be December 2020.

In debating the proposal, Members were generally supportive of a consultation being carried out and commented on concerns that the three yearly testing regime could be regarded as overly burdensome for drivers.

It was noted that the drivers would not be prejudiced by a delay of a few months for the consultation to be carried out as there were no drivers who would be expected to take a driving assessment under the current policy until December 2020 at the earliest.

RESOLVED that

Members direct officers to undertake consultation on removing the requirement for individuals licensed to drive hackney carriage and/or private hire vehicles to undertake a practical driving assessment every three years.

21. CONSIDERATION OF THE INTRODUCTION OF VEHICLE LIVERY REQUIREMENTS FOR HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

Members received a report asking them to consider whether or not to undertake a consultation exercise regarding introducing requirements for the display of livery on hackney carriage and private hire vehicles licensed by the Council.

The Senior Practitioner (Licensing) (SPL), Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) presented the report and explained that when issuing licences the Council could attach such conditions as it deemed to be necessary. In some areas Councils attached conditions requiring the display of signage or livery on licensed vehicles. Typically the signage would include the logo of the council together with information identifying the vehicle and its status as either a hackney carriage or private hire vehicle.

The aim of the livery would be to indicate to members of the public that the vehicle had been licensed by the council as either a hackney carriage or a private hire vehicle and provide assurance that the vehicle had been properly checked and approved.

The options for installing the signage on vehicles included wording being sign-written on directly to the body, or separate signs being affixed either magnetically or using an adhesive decal. The SPL had brought some samples of the magnetic signage and the adhesive decals used by other councils to show the Members, together with some examples of what the art work might look like for signage for Redditch Borough Council.

With regard to cost, the adhesive decal signage would cost approximately £7.50 for two doors. To add a magnetic base for the decal to be attached to would cost an additional £5.00, giving a total cost for magnetic signs of £12.50 for two doors. It was not being suggested that the proposed signage would replace the current licence plate displayed on the rear of vehicles. This would still be displayed and the signage would be additional.

In response to questions from Members the SPL confirmed that:-

- The potential advantage of introducing livery would be to identify vehicles licensed by the Council and that this may be of value to some passengers particular those who were looking for reassurance regarding standards and that the driver would have local knowledge of the area. By contrast, these issues might not be important to other passengers.
- If signage was lost or stolen there would probably have to be a replacement cost to the drivers in the same way as currently applies to lost or stolen licence plates.
- It would be open to customers booking private hire vehicles to request a vehicle licensed by Redditch but legally the operator could still out source jobs to other licensed drivers. Passengers might find that there was a longer wait for a Redditch licensed vehicle, and if that vehicle had had to travel a greater distance to pick them up, this might be reflected in higher charges.

In debating the report Members were generally in support of proceeding with a consultation exercise and referred to the potential advantages of providing the travelling public with a means of more readily identifying which vehicles had been licensed by the Council. Other views were expressed questioning the possible financial impact on drivers of the introduction of a livery together with concerns that use of the adhesive decal option could lead to paintwork being damaged when the stickers were removed.

RESOLVED that

Officers undertake consultation on the introduction of requirements in relation to the display of livery in hackney carriage and private hire vehicles licensed by the Council.

22. REVIEW OF PROVISION OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE STANDS

Members received a report asking them to consider whether or not to direct officers to engage in exploratory discussions regarding the feasibility of making changes to the provision of hackney carriage stands in the Borough. In particular Members had previously made three suggestions set out in paragraph 2 of the report as follows:-

- a. The creation of a new hackney carriage stand at Redditch Railway Station.
- b. The creation of a new hackney carriage stand at the Alexandra Hospital, Redditch.
- c. Making alterations to the current hackney carriage stand located at Unicorn Hill and creating a new hackney carriage stand in Bates Hill.

The Senior Practitioner (Licensing) (SPL), Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) presented the report and gave an overview of where the existing hackney carriage stands were located referring Members to aerial photographs of the different locations (Appendix 1 of the Minutes).

The five existing hackney carriage stands identified were as follows:-

1. At Unicorn Hill - operating 24 hours a day.
2. At Trafford Retail park on the highway at Trescott Road (next to Costa coffee) and on the car park itself adjacent to Aldi (both operating 24 hours a day).
3. On the highway at Queen Street/ Red Lion Street – operating 24 hours a day.
4. At Redditch Bus Station on land owned by the Kingfisher Centre - operating 24 hours a day.
5. On Evesham Road at Headless Cross between the hours of 8pm and 6 pm at the bus stop near “ Steps” and the bus stop opposite the White Hart.

It was noted that there was a five year lease in place between the Council and the Kingfisher Centre regarding the hackney carriage stand at the bus stations, and that this was due to be re-newed later in the year.

The SPL explained that the idea for Unicorn Hill would be to reduce the existing rank to 3 to 4 spaces during the day time and convert the spaces freed up to short term parking. The displaced taxis would be accommodated by the creation of a new hackney carriage stand on Bates Hill. During evenings there would be extra spaces available for hackney carriage vehicles as Unicorn Hill would revert from short term parking to a taxi stand and the additional spaces at Bates Hill would also be available.

The SPL stressed to Members that the report was not recommending formal “consultation” at this stage. Rather, that the officers would in the first instance have to carry out preliminary discussions with stakeholders to establish if any of the ideas were feasible. With regard to the hospital and the station these would be discussions with the relevant land owners as both locations would involve the creation of a hackney carriage stand on private land. With regard to Unicorn Hill, there would need to be detailed discussions with the highways authority and the police.

If the preliminary discussions were positive, then a further report would be brought to the Licensing Committee inviting members to consider moving on to a formal consultation.

In debating the proposals Members referred to a number of issues including:-

- Concerns that in comparison to Unicorn Hill, Bates Hill was more isolated and had poorer lighting.
- That it would be beneficial to introduce a hackney carriage stand at the hospital and that it would increase the choice available to the public; currently the only facility for the public using the hospital was a free phone to call a private hire vehicle.
- That changing the hackney carriage stand to short term parking on Unicorn Hill could be of benefit for shoppers and for the local businesses on Unicorn Hill.
- That in agreeing any changes, Members would want to ensure that the number of spaces available on the amended hackney carriage stands would represent an increase compared to current provision. In this regard it was noted that Bates Hill could potentially act as a feeder rank and the Chair confirmed that there was no intention to reduce the amount of hackney carriage stand provision available.

Overall, Members were in support of proceeding with the next stage of discussions between officers and the relevant stakeholders.

RESOLVED that

Officers engage with the relevant stakeholders to explore the possibility of the following:-

- a. The creation of a new hackney carriage stand at Redditch Railway Station.**
- b. The creation of a new hackney carriage stand at the Alexandra Hospital, Redditch.**
- c. Making alterations to the current hackney carriage stand located at Unicorn Hill and creating a new hackney carriage stand in Bates Hill.**

[Prior to the commencement of this item the Chair used his discretion to allow Mr Imran Altaf from the Redditch Taxi Association the opportunity to make comments on matters he had not addressed during the public speaking at Agenda item 4. The Chair reminded the meeting that going forward, all comments from public speakers would have to be made at Agenda item 4 and not on a report by report basis.]

23. WORK PROGRAMME

Members were referred to the Work Programme at page 21 of the agenda and officers clarified that the next meeting of the Licensing Committee had been put back and would take place on Monday 30th March 2020.

It was noted that the outcomes of the consultations on driving assessments and livery would have to be added to the work programme together with the feedback regarding hackney carriage stands. Officers were also still waiting for the government to issue the new Department for Transport Draft Guidance on Safeguarding but it was not known when this would be published.

Subject to these matters it was

RESOLVED that

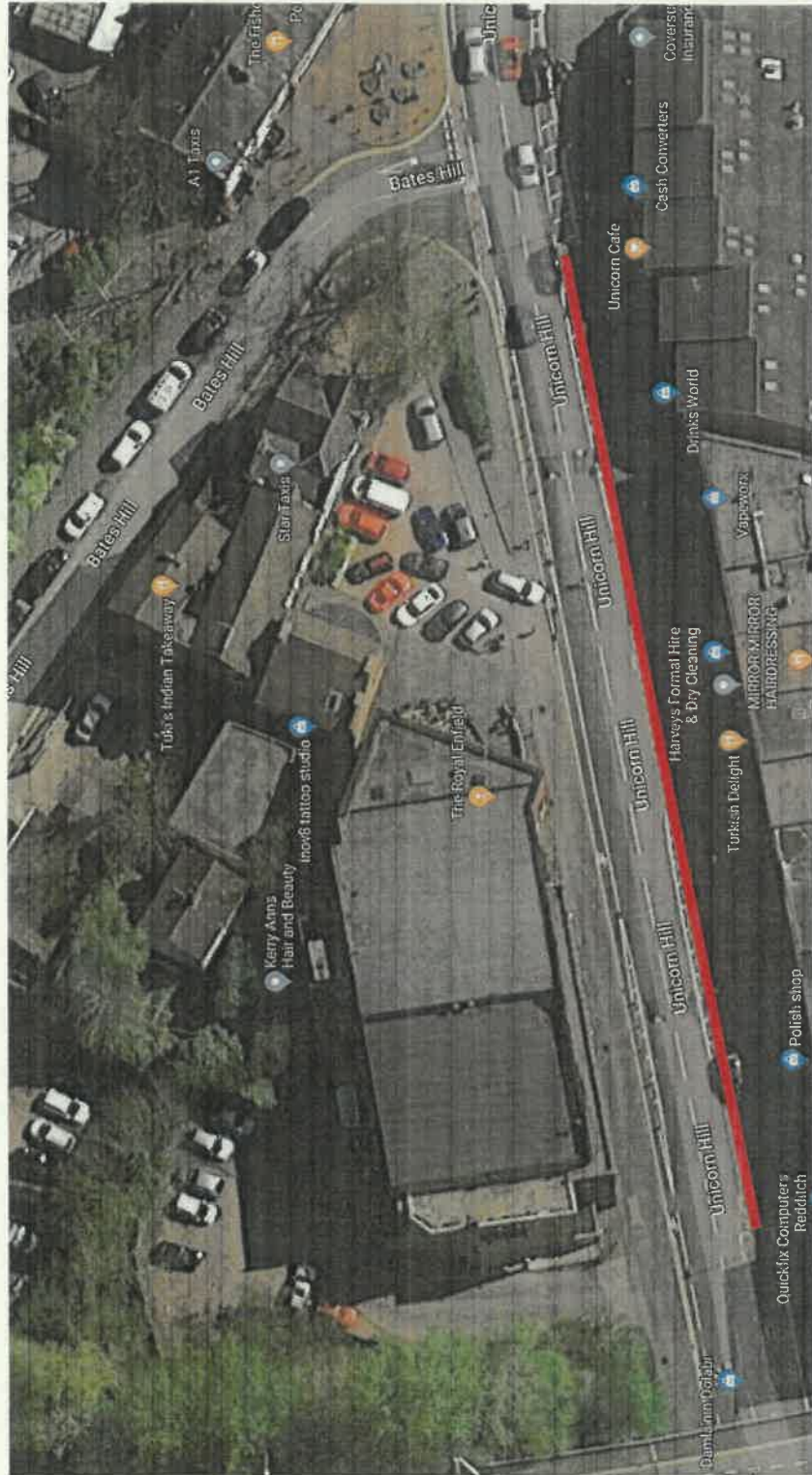
The Licensing Committee Work Programme 2019/20 be noted.

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Current Hackney Carriage Stands in Redditch

Unicorn Hill

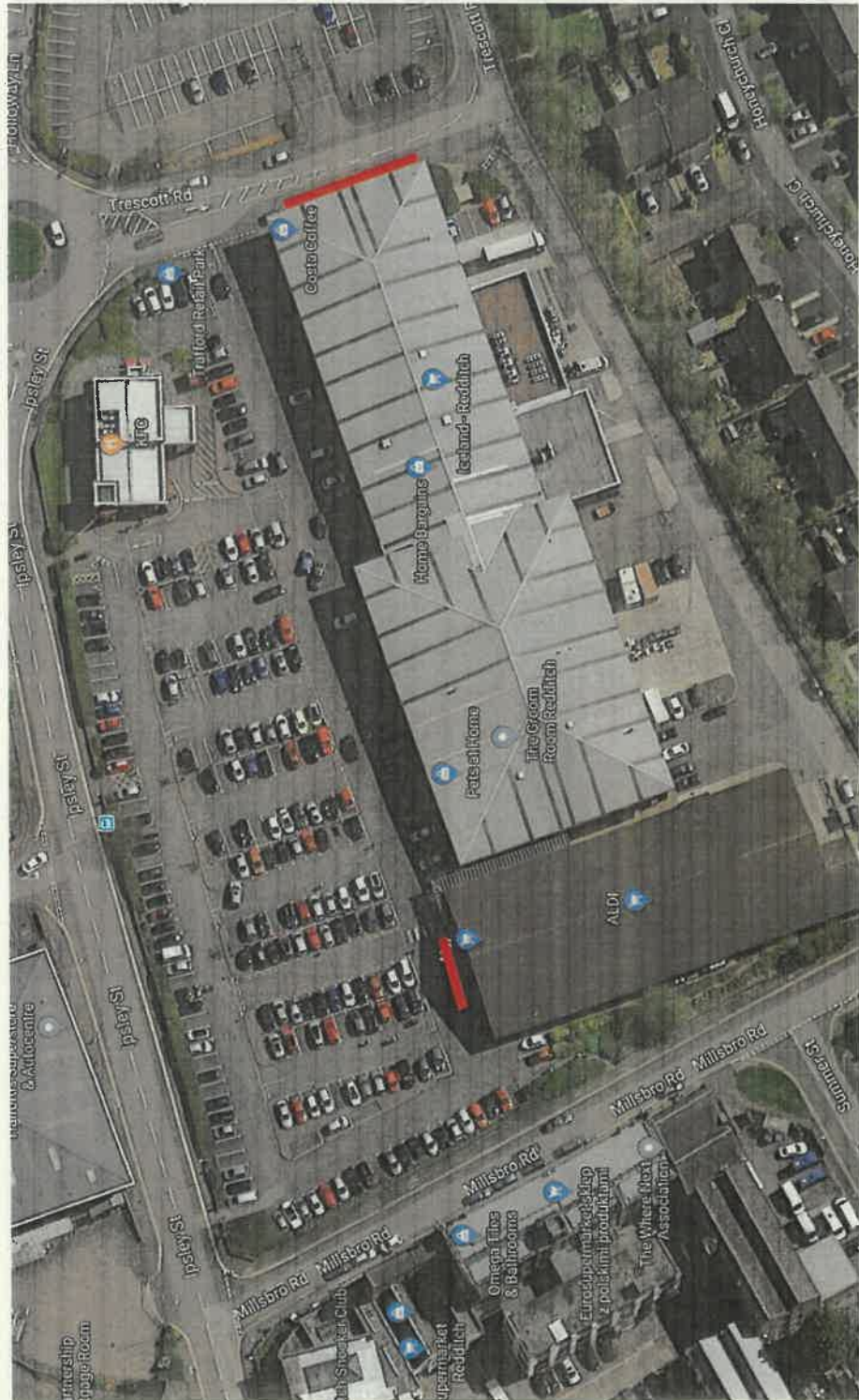
On highway – operates 24 hours a day



Trafford Retail Park

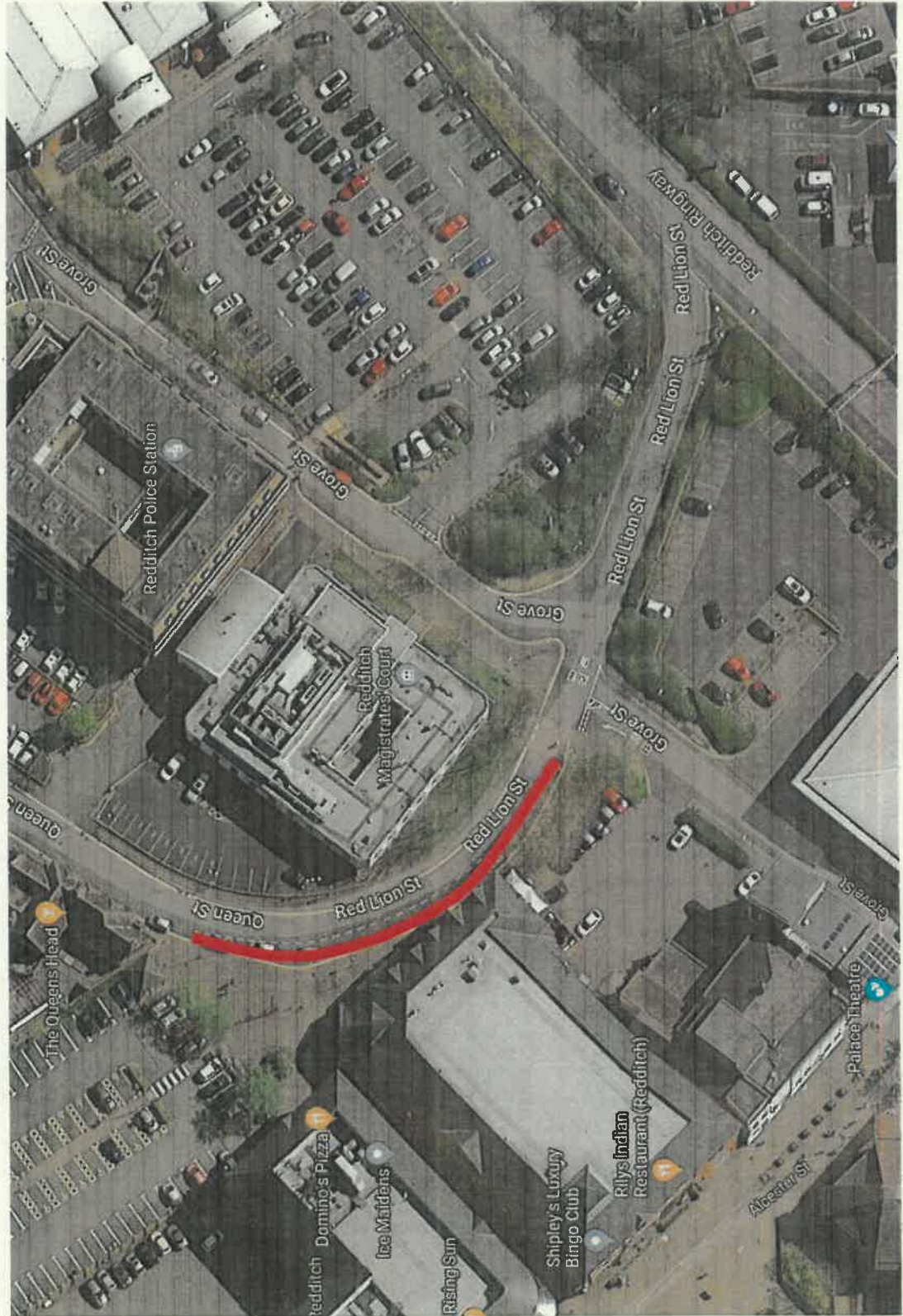
Trescott Road – on highway – operates 24 hours a day

Outside Aldi – on private land – operates 24 hours a day



Queen Street / Red Lion Street

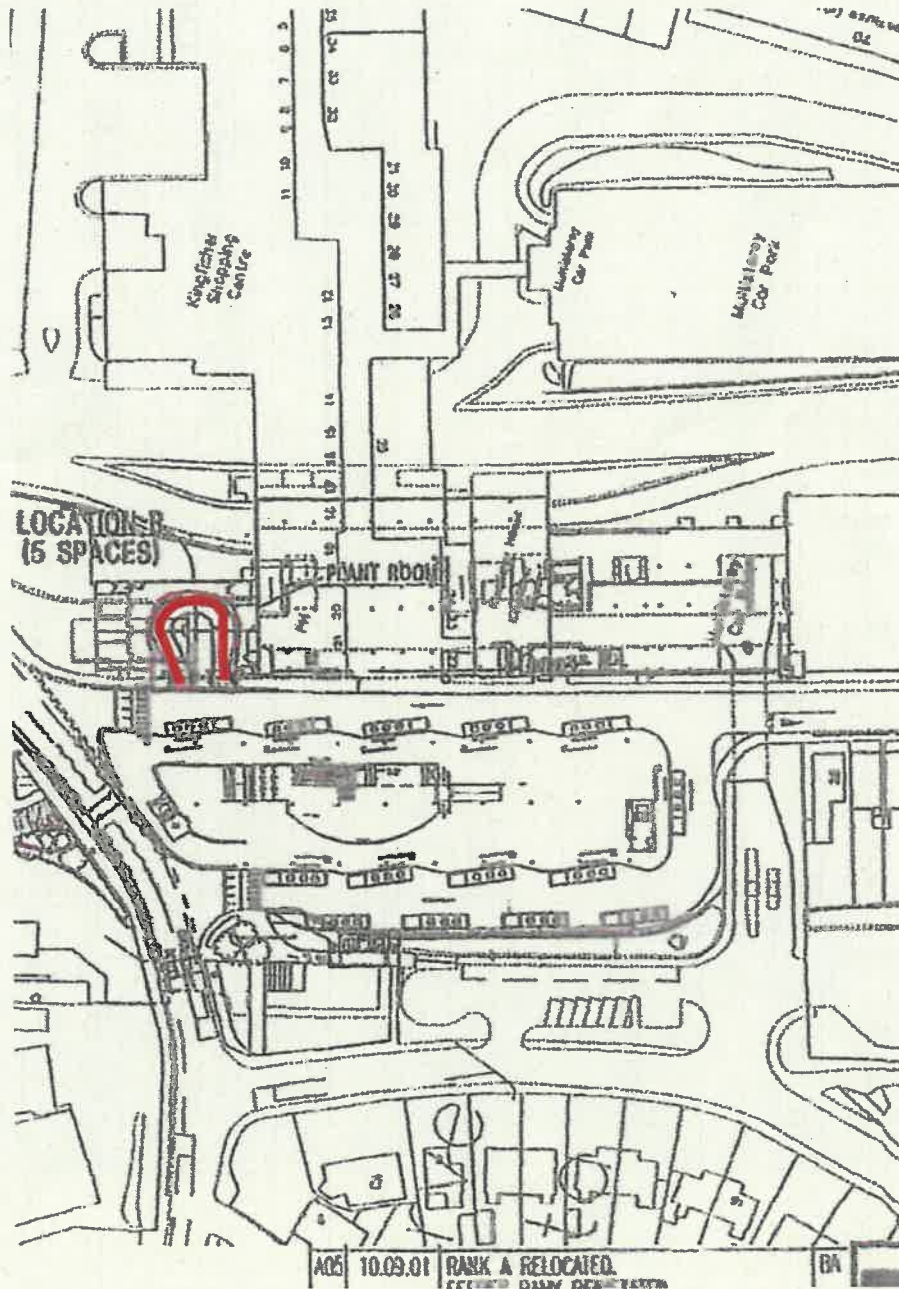
On the highway – operates 24 hours per day



Redditch Bus Station

On private land – Council has 5 year licence – operates 24 hours a day





Evesham Road (Headless Cross)

Bus stop near "Steps" 8pm to 6am

Bus stop opposite "White Hart Inn" 8pm to 6am

