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Sent: Wednesday, January 31, 2024 12:38 PM
To: Dave Etheridge <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Unicorn Hill Rank

This email originated from outside of the organisation

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Hi Dave

Hope you are well. I am hoping there has been a good response from the consultation. I have been speaking to the drivers who only work the ranks, and have a collective response from them. It addresses some of the current and past issues and what challenges we will face in the future.

Regards
Asim

To all involved with the restructuring of the Unicorn Hill Rank

We as a trade appreciate the regeneration of the town centre as this will hopefully boost the local economy and bring more people in the town.

We as a trade are upset that none of us including our association were informed of the changes being made. No consideration has been given to driver welfare. Many of the drivers in the past as well as now cannot understand why the rank has to always make way for parking spaces.

With the kingfisher shopping centre in decline, Unicorn Hill is the main rank in the entire town that provides hope for drivers in the future to make some kind of liveable wage.

With the restructuring of the rank, we as trade do have a few concerns. The current rank has not been maintained and enforcement of illegally parked vehicles is pretty much non-existent. After the first taxi forum meeting in November 2023 the trade was assured there will be more enforcement to tackle the problem of out of town private hires as well as private cars. The enforcement is yet to be carried out especially after 6pm in the evening. The signage for the taxi only parking is also a little too small, thus leading to drivers getting into confrontation with non-taxis when trying to get them to move on. No authorities are willing to take responsibility on who can prosecute the non-taxis parked up.

With the proposed structure of the rank we believe even after 6pm the rank will become non-existent for taxi drivers to use if adequate enforcement is not put into place. As a trade we would like to suggest a system of ANPR to be installed. This will not only deter non-taxis from parking there, but also income received to be reinvested into the town. We as a trade are suffering from loss of income when we cannot get a parking space, and with two local operators allowed a licence right outside a taxi rank, many customers walk away to these private hire companies. From most towns and cities Redditch sticks out as a trade where the licensing has allowed two operators right outside a hackney rank.

Will the drivers be guaranteed enforcement and better signage? Will ANPR be installed so that the rank is not misused?

We would also like for a feeder rank for extra taxis when the proposed rank is full before 6pm. As we believe this has been overlooked.

We as a trade also understand other businesses on Unicorn Hill need somewhere for their customers to park and also for loading and unloading. Currently all the business can load /unload at the rear of their premises. The customers have ample parking around the town including Bates Hill which is sufficient enough for the public to walk to the surrounding businesses. For disabled customers we agree a couple of spots are required so that they can have easy access to the businesses they wish to use. But we believe that once again other disabled users whose disabilities cannot be seen have been overlooked. Many of these customers rely on taxis parked on the rank to get them home safely. Many of these customers have complex mental health, anxiety needs or even autism. This change may affect them, as drivers know who these regular customers are and help them down the hill to get them to who is first on the rank. This we believe will not be possible as the view from the bottom becomes difficult to see and could lead to a lot of distraught passengers.

If the decision makers decide to go ahead with the proposed changes the trade strongly believes that not only our livelihoods being affected but a free for all to park.

Taxi drivers must be guaranteed that the proposals being made are fair and do not impact our livelihood, and proposals being made are not purely based on businesses based on Unicorn Hill. As we believe these business are struggling due to other factors other than parking.