

Review of Hackney Carriage Ranks

- 1.0 The following is a detailed summary of the issues relating to the ranks currently recognised by the Council's Policy (appendix L).
- 2.1 **Milton Keynes Central Railway Station**
- 2.2 This is the busiest rank within Milton Keynes and accounts for around 90% of all hires between 7:00am and 3:00pm. The trade have raised concerns about the layout of the rank. The rank has been adopted under Section 63 of the Act and Traffic Regulation Orders are also in effect allowing enforcement to be carried out by Taxi Enforcement Officers and Civil Enforcement. The signage is legally compliant.
- 2.3 The trade have commented that the sign inside the station points people directly ahead for "Taxis and Buses" when in fact, upon exiting the station, the rank is to the left. The trade are concerned that the lack of clarity results in the public approaching private hire vehicles without advance booking. Whilst illegal plying for hire does occur throughout the Country there is no evidence that this is a substantial occurrence. The Council has no ability or responsibility to amend the sign in the station
- 2.4 The trade have also commented that there are two signs at the rank which state "Queue here for Taxis". One is a modern sign and the other more basic. These signs do not legally need to be maintained by the Council although the trade have mentioned that a) two signs seem redundant and b) they would prefer one bigger sign.
- 2.5 **ACTION:** Officers will aim to encourage and develop a relationship between the station and the trade to improve the internal signage within the station by writing to the management of the station to ask if they would be willing to amend the signage to make clear the distinction between Taxis and pre-booked private hire vehicles to reduce any public safety issues. However, as this is not the Council's responsibility and there is not evidence of safety issues, should the station require any financial contribution it would be for the Hackney Carriage Association to discuss with the management of the station.
- 2.6 **The Hub, Midsummer Boulevard (outside Jury's Inn)**
- 2.7 There are concerns that the rank is used by other vehicles (private hire and domestic) to drop off and pick up passengers or to park and wait in. The rank is busy during peak evening times Thursday to Sunday. The layout of the rank, which leads into a horseshoe shape, causes difficulties for Hackney carriage vehicles to manoeuvre out of the rank when vehicles park within the 15 minute temporary parking bays

inside the horseshoe. These issues are the responsibility of the transport planning policy team and the Taxi Licensing Service (TLS) cannot assist further. The signage is compliant. There had also been discussions about providing an overflow rank along a private access road in the area but due to ownership issues this has not presently happened and may not in future.

2.8 **Action:** TLS has reported the concerns of the trade about this rank and the difficulty of manoeuvring in and out to the relevant transport policy and highways teams. If those teams are open to looking at alternative proposals TLS will assist, however, TLS does not have the remit to amend the current TRO that provides for parking spaces or re-mark them.

2.9 **Midsummer Boulevard (outside the Point)**

2.10 This rank is used heavily during the day and 12 hackney carriages are permitted to wait at the stand. The trade feel that more vehicles could be accommodated within the rank if it were double lined. The main issue is that presently vehicles that are not hackney carriages park within the middle of rank which has resulted in hackney drivers taking it upon themselves to cone the area off.

2.11 The rank is adopted correctly and the road markings and signage present compliant with the legislation. However this rank was previously located in a separate part of the Point and some signs remain pointing to the old rank which Highways have been asked to remove or amend.

2.12 The middle of the rank is not marked out and therefore can be used by other vehicles. The private hire trade have also reported a lack of space to drop vehicles off.

2.13 **ACTION:** A suggestion has been made to the transport team that this rank is re-marked to resolve the issue of vehicles parking in the middle of the rank “legally”. The suggestion is that, if it is possible, the rank be altered to allow for full usage of the space for the same number of hackney carriages and a dropping off and picking up space be created for non-hackney carriage vehicles. Alternatively the middle section of the rank may be cross hatched yellow to prevent any vehicles parking within it.

2.14 **City Square (outside Marks & Spencer's) Saxon gate**

2.15 This rank is not used by Hackney Carriages and the trade does not require this rank and has stated it was never consulted before the rank was introduced. The Demand Survey revealed no use of this rank. The rank is adopted and signed correctly.

2.16 **ACTION:** A recommendation has been sent to the Transport Policy and Highways departments that this space is returned to a parking space. This has been requested previously by the trade.

2.17 **Avebury Boulevard, Xscape building**

2.18 The development of this rank has caused some frustration amongst the trade in terms of how it has come to be used. The rank adopted by the Council is at the back of the car park and is correctly adopted and signed. The amount of space permitted for the vehicles is considered to be more than is necessary and is not a convenient location to the trade due to the presence of an unofficial rank and a private hire operation directly outside of the Xscape entrance/exit.

2.19 This unofficial rank that has been created by the owners of the Xscape building and is marked for the use of Hackney carriages outlined in white. This rank has not been adopted and it is not enforceable by the Council and therefore the signage is incorrect. However, its use is a private arrangement between the owners of the land (the Xscape building) and the users of hackney carriage vehicles.

2.20 The official rank is blocked off by bollards so that hackney's cannot wait in the official adopted rank and conveniently travel around to the front of the unofficial rank. Additionally a private hire booking office is situated opposite to the hackney rank which has resulted in the alleged creation of an illegal rank where private hire vehicles queue up.

2.21 The effect of this has resulted in the adopted rank being of little use to the trade as waiting there for fares (where they cannot be seen) inevitably will result in customers approaching the private hire vehicles. The adopted rank is therefore not convenient to the trade and not used sufficiently and may better be used by the Council as valuable parking space, the need for which has recently been the subject of a separate transport planning policy consultation.

2.22 **ACTION:** The "unofficial" rank at the Xscape building is not to be recognised as rank. Officers have written to the management of the Xscape building to enquire about whether the formal adoption of the "unofficial" rank is necessary. Whilst this would make it enforceable by the Council any cost to the Council in doing so would ultimately be borne by the trade and would not remove the operation of the private hire rank. If the adoption of the "unofficial rank" is possible Officers will then discuss with Transport Policy and highways team the appropriate next steps to carry out the appropriate surveys and consultation to a) adopt the unofficial rank and b) identify the appropriateness of reverting the adopted rank to car parking spaces.

2.23 **Aspers Casino, Xscape Building, Avebury Boulevard**

2.24 There appears to have been an understanding amongst the trade that a rank was provided at the Casino and it has been listed in the Council's Policy as such. However, the "rank" is a small half crescent shape and is double yellow lined. It is not an adopted rank, not signed as a rank and would be completely unsuitable for adoption by the Council as a rank. As it is situated on private land it is

recommended that the Council cease to recognise it as a rank and allow its use to be controlled by the owner of the land as they see fit.

2.25 **Action: None.**

2.26 **Theatre District, Lower 12th Street**

2.27 There are no significant issues raised by the trade in relation to this rank however Officers did observe that the signage, whilst legally compliant, could be considered confusing. The demand survey revealed that very few passengers are picked up at this rank and those that are have usually been pre-booked. As this has not resulted in any concerns being raised no further Action is to be taken.

2.28 **Action:** Transport Policy and Highways will be asked to consider whether the rank is necessary or if there is a more productive use of the space.

2.29 **Bletchley Station**

2.30 This rank is a private rank and the responsibility of British Rail. It is recommended that the Council cease to recognise this as a rank that it can enforce as it has not been adopted by the Council. The demand survey stated that this rank is predominantly served by one hackney carriage. There is sufficient parking space for hackney carriages and private hire vehicles to park, albeit that this can cause congestion, this however, is a matter for British Rail to consider and resolve. As the rank is not sufficiently used it is not considered worthwhile for the Council to take any steps to formally adopt this.

2.31 **Action: None.**

2.32 **Queensway, Bletchley**

2.33 This is a small rank for 2 vehicles and the signage is compliant. The trade do not feel that this rank is used. There is little work to the trade from this rank and it is often used as a parking space or a pick up and drop off space by private hire vehicles. It is recommended that the transport policy remove the rank.

2.34 **Action:** To request that the transport policy team consider the future use of the rank.

2.35 **Coachway Brook Furlong**

The rank used by the Hackney Carriage association is not adopted by the Council. The Council is unlikely to adopt the rank as presently used as Hackney's park across regularly marked out parking bays. The land is privately owned and the land owner would need to consent to the creation of a correctly adopted hackney Carriage rank that could be enforced by the Council.

2.37 **Action:** Officers have contacted the owners of the land to ascertain their thoughts with a view to the Council taking steps to adopt the rank.

Any costs other than the admin costs of adopting rank (i.e. the compiling of legal notices and future enforcement covered in licence fees) would need to be met by the land owner or the trade themselves. Therefore the building and creation of an appropriate rank may not occur. Despite the fact that the trade have created their own version of a rank this is legal and there are generally no enforcement or public safety issues about this that have been reported to TLS.

2.38 **Other Ranks**

The 2014 demand survey listed a 3 other pick up points used by Hackney Carriages, Pink Punters, Double Tree Hotel and the Milton Keynes Football Stadium pick up area. The latter two had little demand at the time of the survey and there is no evidence that this has changed. It is not recommended that these ranks are adopted.

2.39 Pink Punters is a source of complaint amongst the trade due to the fact that there is a private hire operator operating from the site. This is the subject of independent legal advice and enforcement consideration. Hackney Carriages using this site are ranking at the discretion of the land owner and no further action is recommended in respect of this issue.

2.40 The demand survey also revealed possible areas for future ranks in locations outside TGI Friday in the Theatre District, Pizza Hut (now closed) in the Theatre District and Harvester outside the X-scape building.

2.41 **Action:** It is to be suggested that the Transport Policy team, consider the demand survey and consult with the trade as and when necessary in future to consider the possibility of additional ranks.