

**Report of**     **Director of City Development**

**Report to**     **Executive Board**

**Date:**         **12 October 2011**

**Subject:**     **LEEDS BRADFORD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - TAXI ACCESS**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Otley and Yeadon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

### Summary of main issues

1. Executive Board requested in May that a detailed option for a taxi rank on Whitehouse Lane at Leeds Bradford International Airport should be prepared, together with further dialogue with other relevant parties.
2. Members will recall that the airport was sold by the Council and the West Yorkshire authorities in 2007. No control was retained over the taxi ranks. Subsequently in 2008 the airport company re-tendered the provision of taxi services and awarded their contract to a private hire company. This contract runs to 2014. Subsequently, in May this year, a £2 charge for the airport forecourt drop-off facility was introduced by the airport.
3. In 2010, in response to taxi service issues, an initial layout and indicative cost for a basic taxi rank on Whitehouse Lane was prepared. Further to Executive Board's request, a detailed design and engineering review has been completed including full site and public utilities assessments. As a result, a full design solution appropriate to the main access road location that maintains the integrity of the highway as the principal access to the Airport, including emergency vehicles, has been prepared. This is costed at a minimum of £515,000. In addition, there are potentially additional charges for disposing of contaminated material and associated landfill tax of £325,000 plus optional costs of £65,000 for landscaping and customer waiting facilities.

Alternative options have been considered but it is concluded that this option is the only practical of way making provision outwith the airport site and without LBIA's cooperation.

4. The option is expensive to implement due to the extent of the engineering works required. There are also road safety concerns about the mini-roundabout required at the terminal entrance to allow taxis and other vehicles to "U" turn outside the airport site. A turning manoeuvre that has grown significantly as drivers seek to avoid LBIA's £2 charge to enter the terminal forecourt.
5. The airport provides free short stay car parking for one hour within the long stay car parks and also provides a facility known as "voyager" where for an annual charge taxis and other customers can drop-off and wait for up to 15 minutes. However, the taxi trade is not known to have made use of this facility. LBIA has responded to the Council's concerns with an offer to increase the period of stay in the "voyager" area to 30 minutes for taxis. This appears to be a genuine proposal to improve the situation.
6. At this point further consultation on the taxi rank proposals has not been undertaken. However, the previous consultation indicated the airport company's objection to providing such a facility whilst confirming strong support from the taxi trade and endorsement in principle from Ward Members. This position is not understood to have changed. Subject to the Board's decisions, further consultation with stakeholders, the emergency services and other parties would be undertaken.
7. It remains the Directorate's view that the taxi rank option is not the ideal solution to this issue given the airport company's position on the subject, the need for effective traffic management and the issues with the management of any taxi facility that was not part of the airport's operations. However, the existing arrangements and particularly their negative impact on access traffic, especially dropping off on Whitehouse Lane, are considered to be unsatisfactory.
8. As part of LBIA's planning consent for their terminal extension, a review of the airport surface access strategy is to be undertaken and a forecourt management plan has to be agreed with the Planning Authority. It is therefore recommended that officers liaise with LBIA about the development of a suitable forecourt management plan which addresses the consequential impact on Whitehouse Lane and work jointly with the airport to agree a new surface access strategy for the longer term.

## **Recommendations**

9. Members are requested to:
  - i) note the contents of this report and the progress made to identify a way forward in terms of provision for public hire taxis at Leeds Bradford International Airport;
  - ii) consider the option described in the report for a taxi rank on Whitehouse Lane and LBIA's offer to revise their short stay arrangement to better accommodate waiting taxis and advise on their preferred course of action; and

- iii) instruct Officers to liaise with LBIA about the development of their forecourt management plan to ensure that the negative impact of current parking arrangements on the highway, especially Whitehouse Lane are mitigated as part of the process of discharging planning conditions relating to the Airport Terminal Building.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report provides further advice to the Executive Board concerning the provision for taxi access at Leeds Bradford International Airport following their 18 May meeting which considered the recommendations of the Scrutiny Board (City Development) inquiry into 'Leeds Bradford International Airport: Provision for Public Hire Taxis'

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 At their 18 May meeting Executive Board received a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development concerning the recommendations arising from the former Scrutiny Board (City Development) inquiry into 'Leeds Bradford International Airport: Provision for Public Hire Taxis'. This indicated the unanimous view of the Board that provision should be made for a hackney carriage stand at Whitehouse Lane adjacent to Leeds Bradford International Airport. (LBIA).
- 2.2 Members will recall that the Council along with the other West Yorkshire councils sold Leeds Bradford International Airport in 2007. As part of the sale the Councils retained a "golden" share which enabled them to control the name of the airport and its continuation as an international airport. However, the Council retained no control over taxi services at the airport nor the provision rank facilities on the site. Subsequent to the sale of the airport contract for taxi services was retendered which resulted in the appointment of a private hire company in 2008 to a contract which lasts until 2014. This replaced the previous contract with the hackney carriage companies.
- 2.3 The Directorate's response to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations indicated that the proposal for a hackney carriage rank at the airport was an option that was investigated. It was developed in response to issues within the city centre and representations from the hackney carriage trade regarding service options at the airport. However, whilst the proposed rank had support from Ward Members and the taxi operators, the proposals were not supported by LBIA. Issues in terms of road safety and the suitability of pedestrian routes across airport land to the terminal building were such as to conclude that there is no common consensus and that the opposing views were unlikely to be reconciled.
- 2.4 This initial option, which was not developed in detail, was prepared to gain early feedback using an indicative cost which was based on preliminary desk top work to identify how in principle a minimal taxi facility might be provided. It was, however, established even at this early stage that the existing highway would need to be widened. Whitehouse Lane has been designed and built to form the main access route to a major commercial airport. The standards adopted reflect this need to provide for the free flow of vehicles of all sizes, including buses and coaches, into the various parts of the airport site as there is no other access route to the airport site. Relatively limited provision is made for pedestrians with a minimum width footway on

one side only. To accommodate a taxi rank within the existing carriageway width would have resulted in an unacceptable operational traffic lane width. Therefore the initial proposal included a minimal area of widening to provide a more acceptable lane width. Even so this was achieved in the initial option only by reducing the traffic lanes to well below the original design standard. It was also impractical to widen the footway due to these constraints.

- 2.5 Alternative locations for a taxi facility were considered. However, Whitehouse Lane is the only feasible public highway location in proximity to the airport and examination of locations other than the one selected showed that they were a significant walk distance from the terminal and could not provide a sufficient number of spaces without significant engineering works and costs. Similarly it would be difficult and inappropriate to provide formal waiting facilities for the general public drop-off traffic presently seeking to avoid paying the £2 charge.
- 2.6 Executive Board noted the report and resolved that more detailed plans be drawn up for the provision of a hackney carriage stand at Whitehouse Lane adjacent to the airport. The submission of a further report was requested detailing the progress made and outlining a proposed way forward, with further negotiations being undertaken with all relevant parties in the meantime.
- 2.7 Since the previous Board report was prepared the airport has reviewed its forecourt management arrangements. As a result revised parking management arrangements have been implemented. This has included the introduction of a £2 charge for all (non-contracted) vehicles dropping-off passengers at the terminal where formerly there has been no charge for this facility. However, free parking for short stay visits of up to 1 hour is available within the long stay car park areas. Initially some 100 vehicles per week were using this facility. LBIA advises that this has now risen to more than 700 vehicles per week making use of the 1 hour free facility. Depending upon availability these spaces may be some walking distance from the terminal necessitating use of the airport's car park bus services. This facility is available for any user and is identified on the traffic signing.
- 2.8 The introduction of the £2 charge is a measure in the sole control of the airport company, as is the contract for taxi services at the airport. This change has had a negative impact on the public highway, particularly at peak times, with an increase in the number of instances of parking on double yellow lines to drop off as a means of avoiding the £2 charge. At busy times this illegal parking can be quite extensive and potentially disruptive to the free flow of traffic into the airport site (Appendix 1: Ref 1 & 2). These issues have been an ongoing concern in the local area and to ward members. There is also some concern within the surrounding area that airport related parking issues spread beyond the immediate airport environs. Although not directly attributable to the present arrangements this may be symptomatic of wider public issues concerning airport parking.
- 2.9 The remainder of this report details the work undertaken to take forward the preparation of the detailed option for a hackney carriage stand (taxi rank), updates on discussions held with LBIA and the Council and considers what actions may be available to Members going forward.

### **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 Detailed engineering work has now been undertaken sufficient to confirm the parameters and costing for the delivery of a taxi rank facility on Whitehouse Lane adjacent to the airport. The issues arising from the £2 charge for forecourt entry has also been discussed with the airport company.
- 3.2 A copy of the detailed design layout (drawing HDC/257164/GA/01), is appended to this report. This layout provides for approximately 22 taxi spaces situated between the routes serving terminal forecourt. In view of the mix of traffic using the road and its significance as the sole route of access to the airport the option retains standards consistent with the original design for Whitehouse Lane. The present traffic lanes would therefore be retained at their existing width plus the further width to accommodate a taxi rank. This allows for likelihood of passengers alighting from both sides of parked vehicles into a road in which waiting and loading is presently restricted throughout in order to provide for the smooth flow of traffic, including buses in and out of the airport. (see Appendix 1 photographs Ref 3 & 4).
- 3.3 The taxi rank option would be achieved by widening the Whitehouse Lane carriageway to accommodate the taxi standing area on the South side and maintain an appropriate operational road width. Because the road is built on an embankment and the existing verge is insufficient for a safe widening, this option therefore entails the reconstruction and strengthening of the embankment. Diversion of the public utility apparatus currently located in the highway verge within the area of carriageway widening is also required.
- 3.4 In addition to the taxi rank, the design allows for the inclusion of a small customer waiting area and luggage trolley storage all to be situated within the public highway boundary; the airport company having indicating that provision within their property would not be accommodated. The route for pedestrians to the terminal would follow the existing footway alongside Whitehouse Lane to the airport forecourt area. Improvements to this route would therefore be at the discretion of the airport.
- 3.5 The facility has an estimated cost of £515,000 including professional fees and the diversion of public utility equipment. Additional excavation and disposal of contaminated materials and any resulting landfill charges may add an estimated further cost of up to £325,000 (see below). Optional landscaping works and customer waiting facility costs would add a further £65,000. This significant uplift on previously quoted figures is mainly due to the very much greater detail and investigation that has been undertaken, including a geotechnical survey, public utility enquiries and report.
- 3.6 The main element of cost, apart from the basic road construction and traffic management is the need to reconstruct the embankment, which on the North side of the road rises to a height of up to 6 metres, to support the widened road and the accommodation of the diverted public utilities. The geotechnical survey indicated that the existing road is constructed on fill material which has been classified as

contaminated. Therefore it is expected that the material disturbed for the new embankment would require excavation and disposal within the requirements of the Environment Act and this is reflected in the estimate accordingly.

- 3.7 Several other important factors need to be borne in mind when considering this matter. Construction access to the embankment works may require third party agreement. Tree cover on the present embankment which screens the road would need to be removed. Although the Council would be under no obligation to replace this planting, it may be appropriate to consider replacements. A road safety assessment has flagged the need to provide for U turning vehicles which raises issues of conflict with other airport access traffic and questioned the suitability of using a mini-roundabout for this purpose (this would be sited at the junction with the terminal access road which is otherwise the only return route). Furthermore it is noted that the extent of the adopted highway at this location is insufficient to fully accommodate this facility without encroaching on the private road to the terminal.
- 3.8 Alongside the development of the option for a taxi rank, there has been a continuing dialogue with the airport company in the course of which they have been asked to consider the position for taxis following the introduction of the forecourt drop-off charges. As a result the airport has given further thought to the matter and have offered to revise the terms of the existing "Voyager" facility, (Figure 1) which provides limited waiting of up to 15 minutes in a designated area within the short stay car for an annual payment (currently £25). The offer from the airport is to increase this waiting period to 30 minutes, before further supplementary parking charges apply. Essentially, this proposal would provide a more attractive facility for taxis to park close to the airport to wait for pre-booked fares for up to 30 minutes. However, it would not function as a rank and would not provide a facility for picking up casual fares. For these reasons it is unlikely to be resolve the taxi trade's dissatisfaction with the current taxi arrangements at LBIA.
- 3.9 There is also potential to discuss further with the airport how the attractiveness of the free 1 hour short stay facilities already available in the long stay car park could be enhanced. This is something that they are already aware of and giving consideration to. Increased awareness and use of this facility may assist in addressing other concerns related to parking in the airport environs.
- 3.10 The airport is a critical link in the city and wider city region's transport system and it is of paramount importance that the facilities provided to customers are of the highest quality. However, the primary responsibility for these facilities lies with the owner and operator of the airport. It therefore follows that as far as possible any action taken by the Council needs to be integrated with the master planning for the airport site. Whitehouse Lane sits entirely within the airport Operational Land boundary as its principal function is almost entirely the service of the airport site. In view of the road's significance to the operation of the airport it is therefore very relevant that any changes to this road are carefully considered within the overall context of the airport's development planning
- 3.11 Further engagement is also taking place with the airport about their future strategic development plans (masterplan and surface access strategy which relate to one of the conditions attached to the planning consent for the terminal building) and their current planning consent for major development of the terminal facilities. It is a

condition of this approval that before commencement the airport provides, for the Council's agreement, a forecourt management plan. Clearly the issue of taxi access and the recent changes, £2 charge, to the airport's management of this forecourt area are of concern to the Council. As such the initial response to the plan has reflected the Council's dissatisfaction with these arrangements prior to further consideration being given to this matter.

3.12 It remains the Directorate's position that the option to introduce a taxi rank on Whitehouse Lane has significant limitations both in terms of technical delivery, suitability and cost as described above. In the interests of securing the future development of the airport it is desirable that the Council and airport company are able to work jointly to agree a forecourt management plan and surface access strategy to provide the fully integrated solution that befits a successful and popular regional airport. Although it is anticipated that it remains the position that there is no common opinion on the resolution of this matter amongst stakeholders.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

4.1.1 The previous option as considered during the course of the Scrutiny Board inquiry was the subject of consultation and dialogue with key stakeholders and consultees.

4.1.2 The results of this previous consultation in October 2010 are briefly summarised as follows:

- Ward Members for Otley and Yeadon were supportive of a new taxi rank.
- Taxi owners and operators were supportive of the provision of a taxi rank which it was considered would offer the public greater choice, improve options for disabled people and ease taxi congestion in the city centre.
- Emergency services, the Police were consulted and queried the suitability of the existing footway route to the terminal building which customers would need to use, unless an alternative was agreed with the airport.
- The airport company did not support the option, being concerned about its impact on access to the airport; safety issues and routing for pedestrians to the terminal; and adverse impacts on future development plans for the airport.

4.1.3 At the present time further consultation has not been undertaken given the outcomes of the engineering work and the need to report these to the Board for further consideration. However, depending upon the Board's resolution it would be intended to undertake further consultation with stakeholders as appropriate.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

4.2.1 It is clearly important that access provision at the airport meets the essential equality and diversity requirements. In this regard it is a matter for the airport operator to satisfy those requirements rather than the Council. However, in terms of

the option considered in this report an initial Equality Impact Screening review has been conducted.

- 4.2.2 The initial screening has identified that provision to meet the requirements of disabled people is already made by LBIA. Whilst the provision of an additional off-site taxi facility would extend the options available to disabled customers, it would be desirable for improvements to be made in parallel to the access arrangements from any such facility to the forecourt area. On balance therefore such a facility could not be a substitute for well managed facilities within the airport complex itself.

### **4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities**

- 4.3.1 The issue of good access to the airport is relevant to the delivery of integrated transport solutions through the Local Transport Plan and the delivery of City Priorities for a sustainable economy.

### **4.4 Resources and Value for Money**

- 4.4.1 The option for a taxi rank is costed at £515,000 with the possibility of additional spoil disposal and landfill charges of £325,000 which gives a potential total cost of £840,000. If the optional provision of customer facilities and landscaping were required these would add a further £65,000. There is no provision for such works within the Council's capital programme and therefore to proceed a scheme would need the injection of new funds. To-date all costs incurred in the further development of the option and dialogues with interested parties have been covered from the Highways and Transportation revenue budget.
- 4.4.2 The Value for Money case relates to the convenience of access to the airport by members of the public; the commercial benefit of a third party namely the taxi trade; and reputational benefits to the airport company arising from wider public access to taxi services. These benefits have not been quantified at this time since it is unclear what the operational life of any such facility would be given the ongoing development of a new Masterplan for the airport and the airport company's future contractual arrangements for the provision of taxi services at the site over the medium term.

### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.5.1 Should the option described in this report be progressed further it will be necessary to prepare a Traffic Regulation Order for a taxi rank which may raise objections including from the airport company. The report also notes that access to third party land may be needed to effect any construction works.
- 4.5.2 The matter has already been considered by the former Scrutiny Board (City Development) and this report forms part of the Executive Board's further consideration of that Board's findings.

### **4.6 Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 A detailed risk assessment has not been concluded on this matter. Issues of risk are touched on in the various foregoing sections of this report.



- 4.6.2 There is a very significant cost to the provision of taxi rank at this location with the risk that it may not be regularly used or rendered obsolete by changes to the airport taxi arrangements in the future. Since the airport taxi contract is a contractual arrangement of the airport company there can be no assurances on this matter.
- 4.6.3 There are risks in terms of parking management and regulation on Whitehouse Lane which forms the sole route for public access to the airport site. For example, arising from the present forecourt arrangements there is the possibility that the general public would also use the lay-by provided for taxis, which could potentially exacerbate the present parking issues. Although such issues could potentially be resolved through the implementation of more intensive parking management arrangements for the highway, to be most effective the resolution of this issue should be a joint endeavour with the airport company.
- 4.6.4 In terms of cost risk the figures do not include a risk allowance although it would be prudent to do so. Civil engineering estimating rates have been used as a guide to the costs which might be expected, although actual costs could only be determined by competitive tender.

## **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 Further to the previous Board resolution and scrutiny of taxi access issues at Leeds Bradford International Airport a detailed option for the provision of a taxi rank has been fully examined and costed. As a result it is concluded that the estimated total cost of a scheme is potentially in excess of £900,000 to provide a facility which is of a suitable design and appropriately engineered for the site. The report has identified a number of areas of detail concerning this option where further work would be required as part of any subsequent stage in development.
- 5.2 Taxi issues have been touched on in the course of discussions with the airport around a range of planning and highway matters affecting the site. Although the airport company do not support the option for taxi provision described here, they have responded to these concerns with a genuine offer to modify their “Voyager” waiting facility to allow up to 30 minutes waiting rather than the present 15 minutes. However, given that this proposal does not provide for a taxi rank, it is unlikely to address the issues highlighted by the taxi trade.
- 5.3 In the light of progress so far and the fact that unsatisfactory service access arrangements remain, including the negative impact of the £2 charge on Whitehouse Lane, the Council should consider carefully the airport’s proposals for a forecourt management plan in conjunction with the planning conditions attached to the approval for terminal development. In addition, that the Council should make clear the need for the forecourt management plan to suitably resolve the negative impact that LBIA’s £2 charge is having on the proper functioning of Whitehouse Lane as a public highway.
- 5.4 The airport is a strategic transport asset to the city region. It is therefore desirable that a durable solution is achieved. It is most likely that this could most effectively be delivered by a joint approach between the Council and airport company. However, it is very clear that there is no straightforward solution to this issue.

5.5 This report has covered in detail the option for a taxi rank and indeed if it is members' aspiration to provide a taxi rank this is probably the only route to do so. However, should members wish to progress this further they would need to have regard to cost, suitability, technical issues, value for money and the views of the airport. Conversely, if members feel for any reason they can't support a taxi rank option, they may wish to consider the airport's offer for improved "voyager" parking. In progressing this course of action improved waiting provision for taxis would be secured without impacts on Whitehouse Lane, but this would be short of the functioning taxi rank that would serve the casual customer.

## **6 Recommendations**

6.1 Executive Board are requested to:

- i) note the contents of this report and the work undertaken to identify a way forward in terms of provision for public hire taxis at Leeds Bradford International Airport.
- ii) consider the option described in the report for a taxi rank on Whitehouse Lane and LBIA's offer to revise their short stay arrangement to better accommodate waiting taxis and advise on their preferred course of action; and
- iii) instruct Officers to liaise with LBIA about the development of their forecourt management plan to ensure that the negative impact of current parking arrangements on the highway, especially Whitehouse Lane are mitigated as part of the process of discharging planning conditions relating to the Airport Terminal Building.

## **7 Background documents**

7.1 The following documents provide background to this report:

- i) Report to Executive Board 18 May 2011, Leeds Bradford International Airport: Provision for Public Hire Taxis.