

## Report of Director of City Development

### Report to Executive Board

**Date: 10 February 2012**

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

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| Are specific electoral Wards affected?  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No            |
| If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Otley and Yeadon                               |   |  |
| 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?                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No |
| If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:                       |   |  |
| Appendix number:  |   |  |

### Summary of main issues

1. This report responds to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Board (Regeneration) following scrutiny of the full design solution prepared for the provision of a taxi facility on Whitehouse Lane at Leeds Bradford International Airport.
2. The proposals prepared were for the potential provision of a taxi facility which was fully designed into Whitehouse Lane in a consistent way in accord with the original standards of construction adopted for a road which is the access route to the regional airport. The design recommendations were reached after careful review of the original "cheaper" option and were developed to address limitations identified in the original desk-top design. In this regard it remains the Directorate's view that the "cheaper" option would be inconsistent with the standards that would be reasonably expected for a route into the region's principal airport.
3. It continues to be 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.

## **Recommendations**

4. Executive Board is requested to:

- i) Note the contents of this report and the response made to the Scrutiny Board (Regeneration) comments.
- ii) Consider the Scrutiny Board (Regeneration) recommendations arising from their review of the design option previously prepared for providing a taxi facility on Whitehouse Lane at Leeds Bradford International Airport and advise on their preferred course of action in the context of the Directorate's views.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report responds to the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Board (Regeneration) in conclusion to its scrutiny of the full design option for the provision of taxi facility on Whitehouse Lane at Leeds Bradford International Airport as reported to the 12<sup>th</sup> October Executive Board meeting.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 On the 5 April 2011 the former Scrutiny Board (City Development) unanimously agreed that there should be hackney carriage provision via a rank near the airport on Whitehouse Lane Yeadon and requested that officers pursue this with Leeds Bradford International Airport and representatives of the hackney carriage trade. At this time a cost estimate for establishing a taxi rank of £80,000 was quoted based on a desk-top design. Subsequently at their 18 May meeting Executive Board requested that a detailed option for a taxi rank on Whitehouse Lane adjacent to Leeds Bradford International Airport should be prepared, together with further dialogue with other relevant parties.
- 2.2 At their meeting of 12 October Executive Board received a report detailing the development of a full design solution. An update on wider issues concerning the management and planning conditions relating to the airport forecourt and the offer made by the airport in terms of their “voyager” short stay drop-off parking facility was also provided.
- 2.3 The full design solution was costed at a minimum of £515,000. However, the report also detailed potential additional charges for disposing of contaminated material and associated landfill tax of £325,000. Optional costs of £65,000 for landscaping and customer waiting facilities were also identified. No further alternatives were identified in the report.
- 2.4 The detailed engineering work undertaken to prepare the Executive Board report was considered sufficient to confirm the parameters and likely costing for the delivery of a taxi rank facility on Whitehouse Lane. However, final costs could only be obtained by completion of a full design, pre-tender estimates and ultimately a tendering exercise.
- 2.5 These higher costs for the taxi rank option were primarily attributable to the widening of the road to accommodate the rank whilst retaining the existing lane widths of Whitehouse Lane throughout in keeping with the designed standard as an airport access road. This necessitates extensive works to the existing 6 metre high embankment at this location together with associated remediation and spoil disposal requirements. The detailed proposals have paid due regard to the maintenance of an appropriate verge margin between carriageway and embankment and for attending to the public utilities present in the verge.
- 2.6 Subsequently the Scrutiny Board (Regeneration) has reviewed the process, details and costings prepared for the full design solution.

### **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 Whitehouse Lane is a purpose built road provided for access to the airport. It was designed on behalf of the local authorities (the then owners of the airport) to meet the expected needs for the future development and growth of an airport of regional significance. The design standard of a 7.3 metre carriageway is considered to reflect this purpose. The chosen width being akin to that which might be used for a strategic route rather than a local road and is considered to be the most appropriate standard for access to such a regional transport facility used by around 12,500 vehicles per day and adequate for the higher traffic flows that might be anticipated from future growth and development of the site, including an increase in public transport services.
- 3.2 The option provided to Executive Board was prepared with reference to established highway design standards and principles. The choice of design option was made having reviewed in depth the location and the nature and purpose of Whitehouse Lane as described above. Although the road is “unclassified” in highway terms this does not negate the fact that in operational terms, serving the regional airport as it does, it is reasonable to regard it as having a strategic purpose. It is therefore considered that the selected design was fit for purpose and appropriate to the location.
- 3.3 A detailed basis for the cost estimates prepared for the full design solution were provided to the Scrutiny Board for review along with the basis for the final design choice and the rationale for its development from that which was originally considered.
- 3.4 It is considered that to adopt a lesser standard for the road would be inconsistent with the original design. A reduction in the standards would result a sub-standard section of road being created which would become a permanent feature of the access road, which is otherwise built to a common standard. The taxi rank facility would be to a less than desirable standard, especially in terms of passengers using the off-side of vehicles potentially at all times of day. The traffic lane widths would be to reduced standard and the limited widening possible would encroach on the verge with greater proximity to the existing embankment. It is further noted that at least some protection to the edge of the embankment would be desirable, which together with now quantified costs for adjustments to public utilities in the verge would add to the original cost estimate for the “cheaper” option as previously made which would be exceeded.
- 3.5 Whilst the further work on a full design solution for a taxi facility has been concluded and now completed further scrutiny, it is still considered that the provision of any such facility in this way would remain an imperfect solution to the issues raised with the Council. Such a facility would remain outside the airport site itself and without the airport company’s co-operation would not benefit from a properly integrated passenger route to the terminal. However, the Scrutiny Board has recommended that in the first instance negotiations should continue with the airport on this matter to see if such an inclusive approach could yet be reached.
- 3.6 As it stands and as reported previously, the airport company during the course of earlier negotiations made an offer in terms of their existing “Voyager” short stay

facility to extend the waiting period from 15 to 30 minutes. This facility is available for taxis and private hire vehicles to drop off and collect pre-booked fares within a reserved and designated area adjacent to the short stay car park and in proximity to the terminal building. Further discussions are proceeding with the airport company particularly in terms of the airport forecourt management plan, but at this juncture there are no new developments to report in terms of taxi provision.

3.7 If further negotiation with the airport company on the matter of taxi access is unsuccessful the Scrutiny Board has recommended that Executive Board should reconsider and implement the “cheaper” option as originally proposed. In reconsidering whether a cheaper option would be appropriate Members may wish to consider the recommendation in the knowledge that prior to reporting to Executive Board in October a full review of the original “cheaper” option was undertaken. This concluded that a minimum option for localised widening to provide a taxi facility was not appropriate because it would lead to a significant and inappropriate reduction in the designed standard of the airport access road at the proposed location. The key reasons for not pursuing the “cheaper” option being:

- i) The existing access road is a purpose built 7.3m carriageway designed specifically to serve the region's major airport; the minimum option does not comply with these standards.
- ii) Creating a minimum width taxi facility requires a significant reduction in the existing traffic lane widths on a section of the road that leads to the main public traffic access to the airport terminal.
- iii) Accommodating any taxi facility requires a degree of carriageway widening, however this means encroaching into the existing verge which is bounded by an unprotected 6 metre embankment.
- iv) A minimum taxi facility would be sub-standard in width, particularly for passengers alighting at the off-side.
- v) Potential costs for relocating public utility apparatus within the area of works and for vehicle protection along the top of the embankment were not included within the original estimate.
- vi) The option would potentially be inconsistent with the potential future access and service needs of the airport as it grows and develops its future role as a major transport destination and hub in the region.

- 3.8 Negotiations with the airport have not so far led to any proposals on taxi access producing a favourable response from the hackney carriage trade. Whilst there are reasons to continue the discussions especially around the forecourt management plan it cannot be certain what further progress can be made on this matter. However, all things being equal and despite this absence of further progress, this report does not advocate the adoption of the “cheaper” option for taxi facility as a preferable course of action.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.1 The matter has been reviewed by the Scrutiny Board (Regeneration). No further consultation has otherwise been undertaken since that detailed in the previous report to Executive Board in October.

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

- 4.2.2 An EDCI screening has been prepared. However, it remains the Council’s view that it is important that access provision at the airport meets the essential equality and diversity requirements and that in this regard it is a matter for the airport operator to satisfy those requirements rather than the Council.
- 4.2.3 The 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**

- 4.3.4 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 This report further covers issues previously report to Executive Board. It remains the position at the present time that no financial provision for the works to provide a taxi facility on Whitehouse Lane is made within the Council’s capital programme. Any new scheme commitment would therefore require injection of new funds.

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

- 4.5.2 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. However, should an option for a taxi rank be pursued further a Traffic Regulation Order will ultimately need to be prepared.
- 4.5.3 The matter has been the subject of inquiry by the Scrutiny Board (Regeneration) and this report forms the Directorate’s response to that Board’s findings.

## **4.6 Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 As explained elsewhere in the report, the “cheaper” option for a taxi rank has significant limitations which may present issues for the future operation of road and access to the regional airport site. As with all such schemes until a final design is concluded and contract costs determined there are potential cost risks. The report has also detailed aspects where an increase in cost would be likely. Otherwise the risks previously described to the Executive Board of providing a facility which is not integrated into the airport’s forecourt management and continuing issues with parking management on Whitehouse Lane remain relevant.

## **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 In response to the resolution of the May meeting of the Council's Executive Board officers were requested to develop detailed proposals for a scheme to provide a Hackney Carriage (taxi) rank on Whitehouse Lane at Leeds Bradford International Airport having previously prepared outline proposals for such a facility. Input to this proposal was evaluated to enable the Directorate to get greater cost certainty on any proposals considered. As part of the process for preparing a full design option a detailed review of the proposed option was undertaken. This raised issues in terms of the design standards adopted, particularly its situation on a road specifically designed with the purpose of serving the region's major airport. As a consequence a revised design was prepared which retained the design principles and standards of the existing road whilst making suitable provision for Hackney Carriages.
- 5.2 In view of the significant cost increase of the full design solution over the original “cheaper” option first considered by Scrutiny, the option has been scrutinised again resulting in the recommendation that if further negotiations with the airport do not produce a solution the previous “cheaper” option should be reconsidered and implemented. Whilst it is the case that the airport access road is unclassified, it nevertheless has a strategic function in serving the regional airport. It is therefore considered that a scheme to provide a taxi facility that significantly reduces the quality of this road below its present standards is not a preferable solution to the issue. Such a step may not be in keeping with the anticipated long term development and growth of the airport served by this road. Therefore this course of action could not be recommended to the Executive Board given its importance in transport and economic terms.

## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 Executive Board is requested to:
- i) Note the contents of this report and the response made to the Scrutiny Board (Regeneration) report and comments.
  - ii) Consider the Scrutiny Board (Regeneration) recommendations arising from their review of the design option previously prepared for providing a taxi facility on Whitehouse Lane at Leeds Bradford International Airport and advise on their preferred course of action in the context of the Directorate’s views.

## **7 Background documents**

7.1 The following documents relate to this report:

- Leeds Bradford International Airport – Taxi Access, Report to Executive Board, 12 October 2011.
- Leeds Bradford International Airport – Taxi Access, Report to Scrutiny Board (Regeneration), 29 November 2011.
- EDCI Screening Form