Kingston Town Neighbourhood Committee
3 June 2015

Proposed New Traffic Management in Memorial Square, Kingston
Report by Director of Place

### Purpose
To consider proposals for changing vehicular access to the Memorial Square and decide the way forward

### Recommendations

1. Members to approve the principle of extending the current access restrictions that exist for the Ancient Market is extended to operate in Memorial Square. This will provide access only for servicing vehicles between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m. and between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m., Monday to Saturday, with no entry at all on Sunday. Any restriction will make provision for special access arrangements for All Saints church as currently in place for the Druids Head in the Ancient Market; and

2. A further report is brought to a future Committee meeting, outlining how the needs to current users, including blue badge holders, service vehicles and All Saints church may best be met, and recommending the nature and extend of the consultation can be achieved.

### Key Points

A. The Area Action Plan (AAP) for Kingston Town centre K+20 is part of the Council’s emerging Local Development Framework for the borough, as set out in the Local Development Scheme. It sets out planning policy for Kingston town centre over the period to 2020. Policy K10 (K10 (Town Centre Public Realm) outlines improved pedestrians link between Clarence Street and the Ancient Market.

B. Memorial Square plays a major link between the pedestrianised Clarence Street and Ancient Market place. K+20 has identified the link as an area for improvement.

C. The purpose of this proposal is to extend the pedestrianised area and create a much larger area for pedestrians where only servicing vehicles would only be allowed to access the area for loading between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m. and between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m., Monday to Saturday, with no entry at all on Sunday. This would introduce the same controls as exists within the Ancient Market Place. Cyclists would not be affected and will still be allowed to cycle through the area between Wood Street and Union Street.

D. The space has 9 disabled parking bays which are usually occupied and a loading bay. In addition, two or three more cars showing blue badge are normally parked on yellow lines despite the presence of the poorly marked and signed loading restrictions.

E. This small space is dominated by this parking. The associated manoeuvring into and out of spaces create a chaotic situation and real risk to the many pedestrians that use the area and creates a barrier between the two major shopping areas.

F. The current arrangement also causes problems and conflict between pedestrians and services vehicles because of the restricted space create by the current levels of parking.
G. The removal of vehicles from this area would co-join Clarence and Church Streets creating a seamless commercial environment and a significantly improved route the Ancient Market, river and Rose theatre.

H. Any changes will need to provide reasonable alternative parking for blue badge holders so that they are not disadvantaged by the change.

**Context**

1. Memorial Square was repaved a number of years ago to provide a high quality link between the major shopping attractions of Clarence Street and Church Street and the Ancient Market.

2. The area became quickly established as the most popular and central parking location for blue badge holders because of its proximity and convenience for all the town centres attractions.

3. This over popularity has lead to numerous issues such as:
   a. Conflict between manoeuvring vehicles and pedestrians as cars reverse into or out of spaces;
   b. Conflict between cars and servicing vehicles in a small confined space;
   c. Conflict between cyclists and cars;
   d. Vehicles arriving to park, but finding all spaces already taken. These vehicles then wait in an obstructive location or add to manoeuvring as they leave to find alternative parking; and
   e. Potential security hazard. The police have previously suggested that no parking should be allowed at such a central location.

4. Although the accident record for the location is good, with no recorded personal injury accidents, observations of the site will confirm that near misses and conflict between pedestrian and vehicles is commonplace. The large pedestrian flows including many children and elderly users makes this an ongoing concern that should be addressed.

5. The area is also a barrier and disincentive for people to explore the town and its other attractions. The removal of traffic from this area would make the whole pedestrianised area read as a single entity and increase footfall to the Market Place and river.

6. However, the importance of the area to disabled users cannot be ignored. The area is undoubtedly the most popular for blue badge holders offering direct access both to Clarence Street and the Market Place. Any proposed removal of blue badge parking from this area will need to take note of this and make changes to provide alternative parking opportunities having regard to the benefits that would accrue as result of the change.

7. The area is also very important for servicing businesses in the area as the existing loading bay offers all day loading opportunities. A change to the restrictions to match the Market Place will still maintain a reasonable level of service but will place additional pressure on areas where servicing can take place during the middle of the day.

8. All of these considerations, both for and against change need to be weighed and balanced. But it is the view of officers that the most benefits would be derived if traffic is removed from this area. It is recognised that this will need a significant review of other parking arrangements within the Relief Road to offset any negative impact on disabled users and to ensure that their needs are met. This will include both the on and off street disabled parking facilities. It will also be necessary to review how servicing is carried out and include this in the review.
9. The needs and consideration of All Saints church is also highly important. It has a small number of car parking spaces and an occasional need to receive deliveries to this access. Young Choir members also must be considered and their collection and delivery to services and practice. Officers are none the less confident that any changes can be modified to ensure the church is not disadvantaged by change and that an accommodation can be made as was done for the Druids Head in the Market Place.

10. The manner in which any new restriction should be enforced needs also to be considered. The use of rising bollards as used elsewhere is not considered an option as they have not proved as effective as had been hoped. Our experience has shown the rising bollards to be prone to damage, can cause insurance claims when rising and are expensive to maintain. A change in this area therefore provides an opportunity to review the operation of the existing rising bollards and how else these areas might be managed most cost effectively.

Options

11. It is recommended that the committee approve the principle of the removal of traffic from Memorial Square with the same restrictions as currently apply in the Market Place and Church Street so that a further report may be submitted to a later meeting setting out the options of achieving this.

12. The report will explore how the needs of current users, including blue badge holders, service vehicles and All Saints church may be best met as well as how this area along with others is controlled and enforced in the future. It will also recommend the nature and extent of consultations.

Timescale

13. It is anticipated that the report will be submitted in the Autumn in either September or November.

Resource Implications

14. The initial study will be undertaken as part of the traffic team normal revenue duties. The report in the autumn will set out full costs and funding opportunities.

Equalities Impact Assessment

15. Equality impact assessment is not needed at this stage, however, discussion will be taken with relevant stakeholders, and report back to this Committee as part of the autumn report.

Consultations

16. Consultation will be carried after the autumn report with all stakeholders.

Background papers – held by the author of the report
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