

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning and New Communities 26 January 2010
Portfolio Holders
AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Operational Services) / Corporate Manager
(Planning and Sustainable Communities)

DRAFT ADVISORY HEAVY COMMERCIAL VEHICLES ROUTE MAP

Purpose

1. To agree the Council's response to Cambridgeshire County Council on the draft advisory Heavy Commercial Vehicles (HCV) route map.

Executive Summary

2. Cambridgeshire County Council is consulting on a draft advisory HCV route map (appended) as the first stage in the process of reviewing its HCV policy. The map and policy are advisory and are intended to encourage HCV operators to use the most appropriate routes during the course of their business in order to minimise their impact on local communities.

Background

3. The fast and efficient delivery of goods is essential for the economic well being of the community. The County Council recognises that this delivery operation cannot be at the expense of the local environment or communities, with a need to reconcile the needs of both local communities and lorry operators.
4. Traffic density on Cambridgeshire's rural trunk 'A' roads is 90% higher than the national average, and is 38% above average on other 'A' roads. Over the last 10 years there has been a significant growth in the number of heavy commercial vehicles with five or more axles, for example, an increase of 76% on the A14. The density of HCV traffic on Cambridgeshire's trunk 'A' roads is just under three times the national average, with non-trunk roads nearly twice the national average.
5. With the level of development expected over the next decade in Cambridgeshire, there is going to be an increase in the amount of construction traffic generated in and around the County. County Council officers are committed to ensuring that developers understand minimising the impact of HCV construction traffic through villages surrounding Northstowe and other major developments is a priority.
6. The need for an advisory HCV route map was highlighted in Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2006-11. Currently the only guidance for operators / hauliers is the road hierarchy published in the LTP. The hierarchy is not concerned with HCV movements.

Cambridgeshire advisory HCV map

7. The draft map takes account of the current pattern of HCV movement on the network as a guide to operators, and will be used as a basis on which to subsequently review the County HCV policy i.e. the Environmental Weight Limit Policy. This will also need

to consider the wider implications of new HCV traffic which will be generated by the proposals in the County Council's Minerals and Waste Plan.

8. The map will also inform the planned review of the road hierarchy. The road hierarchy is based on traffic flows to reflect the usage of the highway network. This is currently used to determine the road maintenance programme for principal roads, as roads with higher traffic flows deteriorate faster.
9. The HCV map is the first stage in the process. It is not a review of the County HCV policy, nor will it seek to impose formal restrictions on the use of the network by HCVs. This first stage will establish the strategic aspects of freight movement. Subsequent iterations will consider more local issues. Therefore, this is very much a "work in progress".
10. The main HCV routes and abnormal loads routes through the county have been identified together with preferred access routes to county attractors / generators of significant HCV movements. This information is available on the County Council's website. Much of the initiative to reduce inappropriate HCV movement both temporarily and in the long term is now being addressed through the planning process, such as at Orchard Park.
11. The map identifies strategic and local routes, together with any areas where weight restrictions apply. The strategic routes (green roads) on the map are through routes, those recommended for HCV journeys to get as near as possible to their destination using suitable 'A' class roads. The local routes (yellow roads) are those which should be used to get from a strategic route to a destination. The local routes shown going through weight restricted areas will only be available for HCVs with premises there or deliveries to make in the area.
12. Cambridgeshire County Council revised the advisory HCV route map after the start of the consultation in response to a representation from East Cambridgeshire District Council. The revised map downgrades the status of the A1123 between St Ives and A142 (and consequentially the A1421) from a strategic route to local route which could have a beneficial impact by discouraging HCVs from using the B1049 through Cottenham, Histon and Impington.

Proposed HCV routes in South Cambridgeshire

13. In South Cambridgeshire the strategic (through) routes are largely those that form the main transport corridors between Cambridge and the market towns, as well as connecting routes, such as the A505 and A1198. It is expected that these would be identified as the most appropriate routes for HCVs as they are the most major roads linking the main service centres. These strategic routes will be signed.
14. It is inevitable that more minor roads will need to provide local access, to enable businesses to function and to allow deliveries to local shops. However, traffic levels will be much lower than on the strategic routes. These routes include A603 (Cambridge towards Biggleswade), A1301 (Cambridge to A505), A1303 (Cambridge to Newmarket), A1304 (A11 to Newmarket), A1307 (Cambridge to Haverhill), B1040 (Gamlingay to A428), B1046 (Cambridge to St Neots), B1049 (Histon / Impington & Cottenham), B1050 (Willingham), B1052 (Linton towards Newmarket), B1061 (Newmarket to Haverhill), B1102 (Cambridge to Fordham) and B1368 (Harston to A505). These routes are consistent with the location of industrial areas / business uses and would allow local access. (The industrial areas are shown on the

interactive map on Cambridgeshire County Council's website:
<http://map1.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/mappointal/mappage.asp?application=hgv>)

Issues

15. The HCV policy will be reviewed once the draft advisory map is finalised. Only after the policy has been reviewed will it be possible to address local concerns, for example through the implementation of weight restrictions and enforcement action. However, this is likely to be a costly process for the County Council, requiring data capture of HCV movements, investigation of suitable alternative routes, advertising of Traffic Regulation Orders and any resultant changes to road signage. It is therefore likely to take some time to complete the process for the whole county.
16. The map will only be advisory and no enforcement will be possible until the HCV policy and any weight restrictions are revised. In the meantime it is for the HCV operators to decide which routes they take, and given increasing fuel costs it may often be the shortest route. However, the County Council, through the Freight Quality Partnership (CFQP), will continue to work with the HCV operators to identify and encourage the use of the most appropriate routes. For example, an operator near Sommersham was encouraged to use the strategic routes via the A141 and A142 rather than local roads partly because traffic being more free flowing on the HCV route means that journey times are actually shorter and fuel costs can even be lower.
17. When finalised, the map will also inform a review of the road hierarchy. However any review of the road classification ('A' and 'B' roads) will impact upon the funding Cambridgeshire County Council receive for road maintenance and if it does not get the HCV Map "right" could see a deterioration in parts of Cambridgeshire's road network as its maintenance budget is reduced accordingly.
18. There are some small industrial areas at Haddenham and one at Stretham that may be directly affected by the downgrading of A1123 from a strategic route to local route. To make an east-west movement HCV traffic from these areas will need to travel via the A142 / A141 or A10 / A14, which may be undesirable given the additional mileage involved. Therefore it is possible that a small amount of HCV traffic will continue to utilise the A1123, or may divert onto other local routes, including through South Cambridgeshire, as they offer more direct routes.
19. The current HCV policy will only implement restrictions on roads where a number of criteria are met including: over 30 through movements a day, suitable alternatives are available (of at least equal standard), the number of HCV movements that could reasonably be expected to be removed is at least 50% of HCV movements in the area, and the environmental benefits will outweigh any disbenefit to the HCV operator. Although the map and policy are being reviewed, it is unlikely that routes or restrictions will differ substantially, as the map reflects current activity and suitable alternatives need to be available.
20. There is also an enforcement issue as the police are not keen to take enforcement action. Cambridgeshire County Council's Trading Standards may take action through the "Lorry Watch" scheme. This empowers local residents with the opportunity to report examples of inappropriate driving of HCVs via a local coordinator. The information is fed to the police who write to the operator(s) concerned. This type of approach allows partnership working with the community to jointly combat concerns regarding illegal lorry movements. However, even where weight limits are imposed there may still be HCV movements where they need local access.

21. There are no proposals to bypass villages on strategic or local routes. Although work is beginning on Local Transport Plan 3, it is unlikely any bypasses will be included within the plan, given the limited funding that will be available to address all aspects of transport across the whole county and the national policy move away from funding road schemes to providing for non-car modes. However, there may be scope for developers and/or operators to provide measures to mitigate any impacts, for example Needingworth quarry paid for a bypass in order to travel via St Ives instead of through Willingham.
22. There is an increasing role for the planning process to ensure HCV movements serving developments are made via appropriate routes. Each Area Action Plan for the major developments includes specific policies to address issues surrounding delivery of construction materials to the development. For example, Policy NS/24 Construction Strategy in the Northstowe Area Action Plan states “A scheme will be introduced to avoid construction vehicles travelling through villages in the locality and to ensure that any haul routes are located, designed and landscaped in such a way as to minimise any noise, smell, dust, visual or other adverse impacts on existing residents and businesses, and on the new residents and businesses at Northstowe...Traffic flows will be monitored to ensure that the public have a mechanism to feedback any concerns that arise during development.” As a result, the Council will be able to impose conditions when determining planning applications to ensure these matters are appropriately addressed and secure funding to provide additional signage where appropriate.
23. The Council made representations to the Highways Agency following the publication of the Draft Orders for the A14 improvements requesting the County Council (as the local highway authority), together with SCDC and parish councils, be involved in preparing a construction management plan. This will help determine appropriate routes for HCV traffic. The Council also urged the Highways Agency to explore opportunities for recycling waste materials from the Northstowe development site, which could reduce the number of HCV movements in the wider area.

Response to Cambridgeshire County Council

24. There are a range of issues that need to be balanced through a range of mechanisms and the advisory map is only the first stage in what could be a long process. As a result, it would seem reasonable to offer general support at this stage to the County Council for the strategic routes identified on the draft HCV map, as these are the most appropriate routes for through traffic. However, the Council may want to reserve judgement on the permanent downgrading of the A1123 from a strategic to local route until the impact has been monitored. The Council should also request continued involvement in the more detailed stages, together with local communities, to address local concerns.
25. It is therefore proposed that the Council make the following representation to Cambridgeshire County Council in response to the draft advisory HCV route map:

The Council supports the strategic routes identified on the advisory HCV route map as being the most appropriate through routes for HCV traffic. However, the Council would urge Cambridgeshire County Council to monitor the impact of downgrading the A1123 from a strategic to local route. As such, the Council wishes to reserve its position on the reclassification of the A1123 until the impact has been monitored, to ensure that HCV traffic does not redirect and impact on local communities in South Cambridgeshire.

The Council requests continued involvement, together with local communities, in addressing local concerns particularly in areas close to where new development is proposed to ensure appropriate measures are put in place to mitigate any impact of HCV traffic on local communities.

Implications

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| 26. | Financial | Being prepared by Cambridgeshire County Council, the HCV map and policy has no direct financial implications for South Cambridgeshire. |
| | Legal | Being prepared by Cambridgeshire County Council, the HCV map and policy has no direct legal implications for South Cambridgeshire. |
| | Staffing | Within existing staff resources. |
| | Risk Management | There is a small risk because decisions would be taken by Cambridgeshire County Council that may not be favourable to all South Cambridgeshire villages. |
| | Equal Opportunities | The implementation of the revised HCV map and policy will provide opportunities for some groups in South Cambridgeshire minimise the impact of HCVs on their communities. |

Consultations

None.

Effect on Strategic Aims

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| 27. | Commitment to being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all. |
| | Ensuring that HCVs utilise the most appropriate routes should enable businesses to operate effectively within the district, with minimal disruption to the quality of life for local residents. |
| | Commitment to ensuring that South Cambridgeshire continues to be a safe and healthy place for all. |
| | Ensuring that HCVs utilise the most appropriate routes should minimise the impact of HCV traffic and improve the quality of life for local residents. |
| | Commitment to making South Cambridgeshire a place in which residents can feel proud to live. |
| | Ensuring that HCVs utilise the most appropriate routes should enable businesses to operate effectively within the district, with minimal disruption to the quality of life for local residents. |
| | Commitment to assisting provision for local jobs for all. |
| | Ensuring that HCVs utilise the most appropriate routes should enable businesses to operate effectively within the district, with minimal disruption to the quality of life for local residents. |
| | Commitment to providing a voice for rural life. |
| | Ensuring that HCVs utilise the most appropriate routes should enable businesses to operate effectively within the district, with minimal disruption to the quality of life for local residents. |

Conclusions/Summary

28. The advisory HVC route map is the first stage in reviewing the overall approach to managing HCV traffic in the county. The map details the strategic and local routes that HCV operators should utilise. However, until the process is complete there remain enforcement issues. There is an increasing role for the planning process to seek tighter control over HCV movements associated with any development proposal.

Recommendations

29. The Council make the following representation to Cambridgeshire County Council in response to the draft advisory HCV route map:

The Council supports the strategic routes identified on the advisory HCV route map as being the most appropriate through routes for HCV traffic. However, the Council would urge Cambridgeshire County Council to make the downgrading the A1123 from a strategic to local route a temporary measure and to monitor the impact before deciding whether to make it permanent. As such, the Council wishes to reserve its position on the reclassification of the A1123 until the impact has been monitored, to ensure that HCV traffic does not redirect and impact on local communities in South Cambridgeshire.

The Council requests continued involvement, together with local communities, in addressing local concerns particularly in areas close to where new development is proposed to ensure appropriate measures are put in place to mitigate any impact of HCV traffic on local communities.

Background Papers: the following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:

Cambridgeshire County Council draft Advisory HCV Route Map (appended)

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