

Briefing Paper

Background

Wiltshire County Council has adopted a Freight Route Network to inform HGV drivers of the most appropriate routes in Wiltshire. The villages of Corsley Heath (on the A362), Chapmanslade (on the A3098) and Maiden Bradley (on the B3092) are not designated freight routes but still experience high levels of HGV traffic that have a negative affect on the quality of life for residents in these villages. After discussions with Somerset County Council, an objective assessment framework tool, *Large Vehicles in Rural Areas (LVIRA)*, has been applied to establish the environmental, safety, social and economic impacts of the proposal. The assessment tool demonstrates that when all the above factors are taken into account there is a net benefit for society to be realised if the proposed weight restrictions outlined below were to be implemented.

Wiltshire County Council's Cabinet held on 23rd January 2007 resolved to approve the advertisement of TROs for the following weight restrictions as proposed by the Council's traffic consultants, Mouchel:

- The existing 17T weight restriction on the A3098 should be replaced by a reduced 7.5T restriction.
- The existing 17T west bound restriction on the A362 through Corsley Heath should be modified to include eastbound vehicles and increased to 18T.
- A 7.5T weight limit zone should be introduced over a wide area straddling the B3092 which would extend from the County boundary in the west to the A350 in the east, and from the Stourhead junction on the B3092 to the County boundary to the south. The weight limit should also be applied to all the 'B' and 'C' classification roads that would fall within this zone to address potential "rat running" through other communities including Kilmington, Kilmington Common, "The Deverills", and Horningsham.
- The existing west bound 7.5T weight restriction on the B3089 should be revoked between its junction with the A350 and the A303 at Willoughby Hedge in order to address safety concerns regarding the A350/A303 junction. To complement the east bound weight limit on the B3089, the Council intends to advertise a right turn ban for HGVs in excess of 7.5 tonnes from the A350 to the A303.

During the Cabinet meeting, it was also agreed that a Bespoke Consultation Process would be developed to ensure that any response received to the TROs would be an informed response.

At the same time that the Council has been developing the proposed weight limits, the Highways Agency (HA) has conducted an accident investigation report between the junctions of the A303 and the A350 (Furze Hedge) and the B3089 (Willoughby Hedge). In June 2008, the HA's consultants issued the final report. One of the options identified by the HA's consultants to improve the accident record on this stretch of the A303 was to utilise the B3089. Whilst this scheme was shown to be a viable option, the HA informed the Council that their preferred option is to construct a second slip road to the south of the A303 and close the A303/B3089 junction to right turning traffic. The proposal's objectives are to improve the accident record at these two junctions on the A303.

The HA's current timetable for its preferred option is to undertake design work in 2008-09 and deliver the scheme in 2010-11. However, the HA has indicated that its preferred option will be subject to a series of evaluations throughout its development. Consequently, the HA is unable to confirm if or when its preferred option will come to fruition. Bearing in mind the lack of certainty with the HA's preferred scheme, the Council has decided to pursue the weight limits outlined above as an interim measure.

The aim of this document is to set out the predicted implications of the above weight limits.

Predicted Impacts on HGV flows

The proposed weight restrictions will result in HGVs which are not servicing business in the areas affected having to divert on to alternative routes.

Analysis has been undertaken to ascertain the most likely routes that displaced HGVs will take if the restrictions were in place. This analysis was based on the results of roadside interview surveys taken with HGV drivers on the routes where the restrictions are proposed. These surveys provided the origin and destinations of HGV trips.

Table 1 below, summarises the predicted impacts that the planned weight restrictions could have on HGV flows (two-way over a 12 hour period from 7.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m.) on the routes directly affected by the proposed restrictions and the most likely alternative routes for the displaced trips taking into account distance, environment and suitability for HGV traffic.

Table 1. Predicted Impact of the Proposed Weight Restrictions on the Routes

| ROAD | IDENTIFIED FREIGHT ROUTE | PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN HGVs FLOWS | CHANGE IN NUMBER OF HGVs |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| A362 | NO | -48% | -288 |
| A3098 | NO | -92% | -106 |
| B3092 | NO | -95% | -451 |
| A36 | YES | +30% | +365 |
| A350 | YES | +13% | +120 |
| A361 (to A36) | YES | +34% | +439 |
| A361 (to Shepton Mallet) | YES | +15% | +197 |
| A37 (to A371) | YES | +32% | +260 |
| A37 (from A371 to A303) | YES | +24% | +200 |
| A371 | YES | +13% | +60 |
| A361 (North Bradley/Southwick) | YES | +6% | +44 |
| B3089 | NO | Not available | +15 |

The proposed weight restriction will result in HGVs diverting on to alternative routes. It should be noted that all the alternative routes predicted to experience a significant increase in HGV flows are part of either Wiltshire's or Somerset's identified freight route network. As a consequence, these routes are considered to be more appropriate routes for HGV traffic than the routes with the proposed restrictions.

The five members of the Mendip Quarry Producers (MQP) have commissioned consultants to assess the predicted impact of the proposed weight restrictions on the following aspects:

Predicted Impacts on Journey Length

It has been estimated that the restrictions will increase the number of miles travelled by the MQP by 610,890 miles per year. Despite requests from Wiltshire County Council, no information has been provided for the overall mileage for MQP. It is therefore impossible to put this increase into context and ascertain the proportional increase in mileage. It should be noted that other operators will be affected by the proposed restrictions. It has been estimated by the MQPs consultants that the overall increase in HGV mileage could be around 2.3 million miles per year.

Predicted Economic Impacts

During 2007 the additional mileage was predicted to result in an increased cost to operators of £3.5 million. Since this time, fuel prices have been volatile. Consequently, the economic impact of the proposal has been revised. Based on average diesel prices in the South West during August 2008, it is now estimated that the additional cost to the operators would be in the order of £4.18 million. Again, no information is available for the overall mileage for all operators affected by the proposals. It is therefore impossible to put this increase into context and ascertain the proportional increase in cost. However, Wiltshire County Council has been advised by its traffic consultant, Mouchel Group, that the average cost for diverting HGVs from the B3092 and A362 is an increase in cost of 3% and 6% respectively.

Predicted Increase in Emissions

The predicted increase in emissions arising from the proposed weight restrictions are likely to be as follows:

- 500 tonnes CO₂
- 18.2 tonnes NO₂
- 408 kg PM₁₀

Again, no information is available for the overall mileage for all operators affected by the proposals. It is therefore impossible to put this increase into context and ascertain the proportional increase in emissions. However, it should be noted that none of the alternative routes for HGVs pass through an area that has been declared an Air Quality Management Area.

Summary

The proposed weight restriction will result in HGVs diverting on to alternative routes. It should be noted that all the alternative routes predicted to experience a significant increase in HGV flows are part of either Wiltshire's or Somerset's identified freight route network. As a consequence, these routes are considered to be more appropriate routes for HGV traffic than the routes with the proposed restrictions.

An objective assessment framework tool, *LVIRA*, has been applied to establish the environmental, safety, social and economic impacts of the proposal. The assessment tool demonstrates that when all the above factors are taken into account there is a net benefit to be gained for society if the proposed weight restrictions outlined above were to be implemented.