

JOINT MARLBOROUGH AND TIDWORTH COMMUNITY AREA WORKING GROUP

A338 / A346 HGV ISSUES

Policy Background:

National Primary Route Network

The proposed changes / modifications to the RSS (See RSS below) have suggested that the National Primary Route Network (NPRN) be used for freight movements within the UK. "The primary route network (including motorways and trunk roads) should be promoted for use by HGV's in preference to other roads. The routes should be signed appropriately. Environmental weight restrictions should not be placed on these routes".

The A338 and A346 are both on the NPRN and so, as such will be subject to freight movements as detailed above. Wiltshire County Council are to oppose these recommendations through the RSS consultation process.

MCATS & TCATS

There have been long-standing concerns in communities along the A338/A346 corridor regarding the number of through HGV's using the route. However, following the opening of the A34 Newbury Bypass in November 1998, it was anticipated that there would be a transfer of HGV's away from the A338/A346 onto the more suitable A34/M4 route. Surveys undertaken by the County Council in 1999 affirmed this to be the case, with a significant reduction in the number of long-distance HGV's, particularly articulated lorries.

WCC conducted transport studies for both the Marlborough and Tidworth Community Areas in 2005. Despite the impacts of the Newbury Bypass, local concern remains that the route is still being used by a large amount of long-distance HGV traffic since it is a shorter route (in terms of distance) to get to the M4 at Junction 15 from the south coast ports, than using the recognised strategic freight route of the A303/A34/M4(J13).

This concern has been highlighted in both Community Area Transport Strategies produced for the Marlborough and Tidworth Community Areas. The strategies have aspirations that some form of alleviation will be afforded to communities along the route corridor. The strategies recommend that the Wiltshire Freight Quality Partnership (FQP) investigate the usage along the A338/A346 corridor to ascertain the degree of strategic lorry movements, and recommend the development of a freight management plan if necessary. The County Council took responsibility for this action, and undertook a survey to establish the degree of strategic lorry movements along the A338/A346 corridor in October 2006.

Wiltshire Freight Strategy

Advances in road haulage and distribution methods have provided us with unparalleled consumer choices, 24-hour shop opening hours and just-in-time deliveries. In fact, efficient and flexible freight distribution services have become such an integral part of modern living that it is difficult to imagine life without them. However, the way in which freight distribution supports economic vibrancy and growth cannot be at the expense of the environment or local communities.

The County Council recognises this and takes seriously the need to achieve a more sustainable distribution of freight that balances the needs of the economy, the environment and society.

Wiltshire's Freight Strategy was reviewed in 2000 by consultants Parkman and the outcomes were subsequently included in LTP1. A Freight Action Plan was then included as part of the APR 2002. The Freight Strategy policies and action plan were again reviewed by the FQP for the current LTP2.

The current freight strategy and action plan is set for review again, with the assistance of the FQP. The review and subsequent adoption of the strategy is expected to be complete by spring 2010.

Freight Quality Partnership

Formed in November 2000, the FQP provides a forum for representatives from industry, freight operators, local government and other interested parties to discuss freight related matters and to promote solutions which reconcile the need for access with local environmental and social concerns. Through regular meetings, the FQP has progressed Wiltshire's Local Transport Plan (LTP) Freight Strategy and Freight Action Plan. This latter document identifies the future actions that are necessary to implement each of the ten Freight Strategy policies.

Wiltshire's Advisory Freight Routes

A key component of the Freight Strategy is the establishment of a two-tier system of lorry routes, comprising a network of strategic routes and a supporting network of local lorry routes. The aim is to route long distance lorries where possible, on to Strategic Lorry Routes; the M4 motorway, A303, A34, A36 and A350. As an aid to the implementation of the lorry route networks, a Freight Routes in Wiltshire leaflet was produced in 2003. This informed HGV drivers of the most appropriate routes to use in Wiltshire. By using these routes, drivers will reduce the stress of driving by avoiding unsuitable roads and minimise their impact on the environment and local residents while still meeting the economic needs of the County. Over 10,000 leaflets showing the Wiltshire HGV Route Network have been issued to lorry operators to inform drivers of the most appropriate routes in the County. This map will be reviewed and updated as part of the freight strategy review.

The A338 and A346 are currently designated as 'not identified for through HGV traffic' within the network. As this designation is only advisory, this does not place any limitations on the rights of HGV's to use these roads.

Strategic Signage Review

The County Freight Study undertaken in 2000 for inclusion as part of the County Council's first Local Transport Plan submission suggests the establishment of a core network of strategic freight routes, along with a positive signing strategy, to encourage the use of suitable routes. In terms of the A338/A346 corridor, the Freight Study recognised that the completion of the A34 Newbury afforded an opportunity to maximise the use of the A34 as a strategic freight route. It concluded that the County Council needed to work with the Highways Agency and affected neighbouring highway authorities to review strategic signing along the A34 corridor.

As a result, the Council undertook a review of strategic signing requirements, and passed the recommendations forward to the Highways Agency. These included a number of direction signing improvements that could be achieved in order to confirm the A34/M4 as the preferred route between Southampton, Portsmouth, and South Hampshire, and Bath, Bristol, Swindon, Wales and the Midlands. However, the Highways Agency has so far not felt able to accept the County Council's recommendations.

Subsequently, recommendations from the Government Office's Bristol/Bath to South Coast Study (February, 2004) include that respective councils work with the Highways Agency to develop an Area Wide Strategic Signing Strategy that extends from the South Coast ports to the M4 motorway. Despite liaisons with the Government Office, development of this strategy has not yet been able to be progressed.

The Highways Agency (HA) is not amenable to changing the current signage as this would be contrary to their policies (Local Transport Note 1/94).

Regional Spatial Strategy – (RSS) Regional Freight Routes

The Regional Spatial Strategy or RSS is a new kind of plan for the South West for up to the year 2026.

The Assembly approved the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy at its meeting on 10 March 2006, and submitted it to Government on 24 April 2006.

The Draft RSS was open for public consultation during summer 2006. Consultation responses were submitted to the independent Examination in Public (EiP) Panel. The Panel invited organisations and individuals to be participants in the Examination in Public to discuss and test the Draft RSS. The EiP ran from 17 April to 6 July 2007. The independent Panel's report was published on 10 January 2008. This was submitted to the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State published the proposed changes to the Draft RSS on 22 July 2008. This marked the start of a 12 Week consultation which ends on 17 October 2008.

The Panel proposed extensive re-structuring of section 5 (Transport) of the RSS and that Section 5 should be recast as an identifiable Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) based on the guidance set out in PPS11.

The RTS removed the existing regional freight map and replaced this with a 'strategic corridor' approach. This corridor approach aims to identify corridors of national and regional importance and provides a framework to provide the objective of maintaining reliable and resilient connections between the South West and the rest of the U.K.

Satellite Navigation

The council have been informed of several incidences of satellite navigation systems (SatNav) directing lorries along inappropriate rural routes. This problem has two principle factors to consider:

Incorrect Software – Most HGV and van drivers that are using SatNav systems have purchased ones designed specifically for the car market. These systems take no account of weight, height or environmental restrictions that HGV's have to adhere to.

Failure of drivers to read the road – In many cases, if a driver equipped with SatNav also took note of visual cues such as warning signs or the feel of a road, they should be able to assess the risks and decide that a route suggested by their SatNav system is inappropriate. Unfortunately, some drivers choose to trust their SatNav implicitly and fail to properly "read the road ahead".

The Ordnance Survey is currently working with manufacturers of such systems to supply them with additional information on advisory lorry network routes, height and weight restrictions. Once this work is completed, SatNav manufacturers will make it available to users via updates. This is currently understood to be a long term aspiration due to technical and financial limitations. At the time of writing only one company is known to supply a dedicated SatNav system for lorries in the UK. This system however only detects height and weight restrictions and in tests has not performed to a high level of satisfaction. It is to be noted that given this is a comparatively small market (UK HGV routing) in the global SatNav market, Industry leaders in this field have not committed to any release of specific HGV SatNav systems. The Regional freight forum is currently engaging with all local authorities to try to provide a short term measure to try and aid the current situation. The idea is to collate all TRO and 'areas of interest' from each authority and provide a data set that can be uploaded by individual drivers.

Network Management Plan

The County Council is developing a Network Management Plan which will demonstrate how it is meeting the requirements of the Network Management Duty (NMD) which forms part of the Traffic Management Act 2004 (TMA).

The proposed overall objectives of the Council's Network Management Plan are:
To make the best use of existing transport infrastructure through effective design, management and maintenance;
To minimise delays and disruption, and improve journey time reliability on key routes;
To facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods on the highway network in the most sustainable manner possible; and

To reduce the impact of traffic on people's quality of life and Wiltshire's built and natural environment.

To inform the development of the Network Management Plan, a compliance analysis has been undertaken to establish what the County Council already does in terms of network management and in doing so, establish what actions the Council and its partners need to take to fulfil the requirements of the NMD. The compliance analysis was based on the requirements set out in the DfT's 'Network Management Duty Guidance' (November 2004) and as such, the County Council considers that it is meeting the arrangements set-out in 'The Traffic Management (Guidance on Intervention Criteria) (England) Order 2007'.

Where the compliance analysis has established that further work is necessary to meet the requirements of the NMD, the Council has developed a detailed action plan. Both the draft Network Management Plan and its associated detailed action plan are to be made available on the County Council's website.

Local Freight Route Assessment & Priority Mechanism

The County Council receives many complaints from residents and Town/Parish Councils regarding the impact of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) on their local communities, with the request that solutions, typically weight limits, be developed to mitigate adverse impacts.

In response, the County Council, in association with the Wiltshire Freight Quality Partnership (FQP), has previously undertaken a number of freight studies that have led to the development of freight management measures in various parts of the county. However, the County Council does not have the staff or financial resources to undertake studies and develop solutions for every local freight issue raised. In addition, the County Council also needs to be mindful of its sustainable approach to freight distribution, outlined in the Local Transport Plan (LTP) Freight Strategy, which seeks to balance the needs of the economy, environment, and society. Given the above, an assessment and priority mechanism has been developed to more equitably assess each local freight issue in order to inform the County Council where it should focus its limited resources. In April 2008, the Assessment and Priority Mechanism was approved by the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Economic Development.

The Assessment and Priority Mechanism has been developed as a two-part process. In the first part, the freight issues are assessed against a range of scoring criteria to determine the likely impact that HGVs are having along a route and on the associated local communities. This process produces a priority list highlighting those locations/routes where HGV impacts are likely to be most significant.

The second part of the mechanism establishes whether there are any wider policy, operational and/or deliverability issues that mean further investigation of the top priority issues should not be undertaken.

This route has been assessed as part of this process and does not fall in to the priority list for further investigation. The A346 Herd Street to Barn Street, Marlborough is 6th in the list. The A338 Collingbourne Ducis is 25th in the list. To put this into context, 62 routes/locations were considered and prioritised as part of the local freight assessment and priority mechanism as at 31st March 2008. The

assessment mechanism will be performed annually and will consider new locations as well as reviewing existing locations.

RSS 5.1 Transport Map

