

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
6 DECEMBER 2011**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

10

TITLE OF REPORT: MEMBERS QUESTIONS

The following question has been submitted by Councillor David Billing.

(A) Hitchin Industrial Area – Heavy Goods Vehicles

"The traffic of heavy goods vehicles to Hitchin's industrial area, in particular the scrap-yard on Wallace Way, has been observed to continue at night-time, so as to park up in advance of the permitted opening time of the scrap-yard. This is very disruptive to the sleep and quality of life of residents, particularly in Cadwell Lane and its approach roads. Some time ago, with residents' support, I asked Hertfordshire Highways to look into the feasibility of a night-time HGV ban, ie no entry for HGVs between certain times (even for access) or a no waiting ban again for certain times. This might apply for example to Cadwell Lane, Girdle Road, Hillfield Avenue, Wilbury Way, Grove Road and Woolgrove Road, but the area could be adjusted to what is most feasible. We have heard no more for a year or more.

Please could we have a considered view of the legality and practicality of such a ban, together with the process for introducing it?"

The Strategic Director of Planning, Housing and Enterprise has provided the following initial response of the NHDC Transport Policy Officer.

"Both Hertfordshire Highways and Hertfordshire Constabulary have been consulted on this issue. Discussion remains ongoing but the following summarises the situation to date.

There are two basic options with regard to reducing night time HGV impacts.

1. A night-time weight restriction that prevents vehicles over a defined weight from using certain roads on specific days/times. This restriction would be enforceable by the Police as a moving traffic offence.
2. A night-time weight limited waiting restriction that prevents vehicles over a defined weight from waiting on defined roads on specific days/times. As a 'parking' restriction this would be for NHDC to enforce.

Both of the above require Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). To support TROs a robust evidence base needs to be established in order to overcome any objections.

Option 1.

Normally used in circumstances where there is a 'preferred' route or routes for HGVs but they are using 'inappropriate' routes. It is a matter of judgement based on evidence as to the extent of the impact on residents versus the implications for business operations.

Herts Constabulary advise that to restrict overnight access for HGVs via both of the available routes would be unique in Hertfordshire.

This type of restriction prevents HGVs from travelling through the restriction but not to and from destinations within the restriction (i.e. 'for access only'). The restriction should normally be promoted for no more than 8 hours within any 24. Anything longer would need Secretary of State approval.

Another option would be to define one route as the 'preferred' route and restricting the other. Again this is a matter for judgement but care should be taken to consider the implications for HGV routing in town in order to access the preferred route.

This type of restriction does not restrict HGVs from waiting or loading on restricted roads which they are permitted to use for access only. HGVs would not be able to access roads beyond the restriction so, technically, waiting and loading on these roads would not be an issue.

A TRO for this option would need to be promoted by Herts Highways. It would be likely to attract objections from affected businesses and possibly organisations representing freight transport interests.

The hours of restriction need to be carefully considered so as to balance the need to preserve residential amenity and allow suitable access for businesses. A decision on hours should be reached in consultation with local residents and businesses.

The Police would be required to enforce this type of restriction and the resources to do this should be considered.

There is no provision in the Hitchin Urban Transport Plan for this type of proposal.

Option 2.

There are currently two TROs in place in the district that restrict overnight weekday and at any time weekend parking by vehicles over 5 tonnes. These TROs affect Baldock and Letchworth and as a general summary cover all roads except those in employment areas. The implication being that vehicles over 5 tonnes are encouraged to use non-residential areas to park during days/hours of restriction.

In Hitchin a similar Order could be promoted by HCC or NHDC but it would only restrict HGVs from parking on defined roads, not using roads to access the employment area as per Option 1.

If it is considered that HGVs parking on certain roads is the main problem for residents then it would be sensible to implement a localised weight limited parking restriction to protect the most affected areas.

If an HGV restriction as per option 1 is proposed then it would make sense to consider an option 2 restriction on other roads that may be affected by 'displaced' HGVs parking overnight before access restrictions end. Without access to employment area roads to park on or in the absence of any other alternative HGV parking, businesses may feel that this is an unreasonable situation compared to Baldock and Letchworth.

Hours of restriction could be the same as for Baldock and Letchworth. The area and times of coverage are mainly dictated by whether an Option 1 restriction is also promoted.

NHDC would be the enforcing authority although prior to the consideration of any controls resources to enforce overnight and weekend restrictions need to be assessed.

There is no provision in the Hitchin Urban Transport Plan or NHDC Hitchin Parking Review for this type of proposal.”

Recommendation

At this stage it is recommended that District and County Councillors for affected areas meet with officers of Herts Highways, Herts Constabulary and NHDC to discuss the issues arising, identify costs/resources and the preferred approach. This would allow more detailed consideration and clarification of the above options.

Any discussion should seek to establish the evidence base for any proposals and, if necessary, the work required to support the evidence base as well as consultation with interested parties.

HCC’s priorities are set out in the UTP and NHDC’s within the Hitchin Parking Review. Any discussion on the way forward needs to consider this context.

Simon Young
Transport Policy Officer
01462 474846
simon.young@north-herts.gov.uk

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