

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL COMMITTEE (GUILDFORD)

DATE: 30 SEPTEMBER 2015



LEAD OFFICER: PETER HITCHINGS (Highways Engineer)

SUBJECT: SHERE RURAL AREA HGV REVIEW UPDATE

DIVISION: Shere, Albury and Shalford. (Guildford). Also Dorking Hills (Mole Valley) and Cranleigh and Ewhurst (Waverley)

SUMMARY OF ISSUE

On 25th March, the Guildford Local Committee agreed to carry out a review of HGV activity in the rural area around the Parish of Shere seeking to address long standing concerns of residents on the impact of perceived inappropriate HGVs journeys through this area. Much of the study area lies within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Local Committee (Guildford) is asked to:

- (i) Endorse the study approach for identifying and addressing rural HGV issues; &
- (ii) Support the proposed direction of the project to coordinate this project with the work of the Surrey Hills AONB Quiet Lanes and De-Cluttering Working Group including trialling the decluttering approach developed by Norfolk County Council.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

A certain level of HGV activity on this area's rural road network is inevitable due to agricultural, local business activity, and the need for local deliveries. However, it is perceived that many HGV movements through this area are unnecessary and having a detrimental impact on the safety and character of rural lanes.

It is expected that some problems on minor lanes can be eased by a combination of defining and signing the most appropriate routes for HGV's through rural areas together with low cost measures identified through discussions with Parish Councils. Some of these measures are already being promoted by the Surrey Hills Quiet Lanes and De-Cluttering Working Group. .

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 An assessment and feasibility study of HGV activity and routeing through the centre of the area between Ewhurst and Cranleigh and Shere has been carried out.
- 1.2 Changes in lorry routeing patterns can impact on other areas so all parishes councils within a wider study area are being consulted on any changes and invited to identify other HGV related issues. A review of current directional signing through the area will offer opportunities to define the most appropriate routes for HGV's and then audit and rationalise all road signing and street furniture along affected routes. Over time this is expected to offer financial savings through reduced maintenance and officer time.
- 1.3 This work will coordinate with the established Surrey Hills Quiet Lanes and De-cluttering Working Group which includes representatives of Surrey parish councils. This Group includes representatives of parish councils and is chaired by Liz Cutter of the Surrey Association of Local Councils. Surrey County Council has been working with this Group to provide opportunities for people to enjoy country lanes in greater safety.
- 1.4 Once the most appropriate HGV routes have been identified the project will trial a new award winning approach developed by Norfolk County Council to auditing, and where appropriate, removing redundant signs with the aim of clarify HGV route choices and making country lanes more attractive and accessible to visitors and non-motorised users and, over time reduce maintenance costs.
- 1.5 The impact of inappropriate HGV activity on Surrey's rural communities has been a concern of local residents for many years. However, localised solutions have often led to problems transferring to adjacent areas and some local traffic management solutions have not always been welcomed in environmentally sensitive rural areas.
- 1.6 With this in mind the study area extends beyond the Shere parish area to cover an area of analysis enclosed by the A25/A246 to the north, the A281 to the west and the A24/A29 to the east.
- 1.7 Coordinating this work with the Surrey Hills quiet lanes and de-cluttering project would streamline consultations and ensure that the wider AONB aims are met to:
 - Discourage through traffic and inappropriate use by HGVs.
 - Conserve and enhance the rural and historic character of country lanes and villages
 - Reduce traffic speeds and make lanes safer, quieter and help to enhance accessibility for walkers, cyclists and equestrians in the project area.

2. ANALYSIS:

- 2.1 An initial assessment of the area between Ewhurst and Shere has revealed that there is some ambiguity of destination signing. A more detailed review of directional road signing will be carried out to discourage unnecessary HGV movements through the area and focus local HGV traffic on the most appropriate routes. Parish councils will be involved in this decision making

process as well being asked to identify other local HGV issues. The satnav mapping companies will be advised of the local lanes which are unsuitable for HGV's and the most appropriate routes for local journeys.

- 2.2 As there is common ground between the HGV review and the work of the Surrey Hills Quiet Lanes and Decluttering working group, especially the involvement of parish councils, there are clear benefits in coordination between the projects at appropriate stages.
- 2.3 De-cluttering is now an accepted objective as part of a strategy to promote the greater enjoyment and appreciation of the countryside. Much of countryside clutter is made up of redundant or unnecessary traffic signs. The Department for Transport in its Signing the Way policy document (2011) states that removing street clutter caused by unnecessary signs and lines can improve driver understanding by reducing distractions as well as improving the attractiveness of the local environment.
- 2.4 In 2015, Norfolk County Council won the national Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation award for clutter reduction in rural areas. The Norfolk project is an ongoing process that automatically considers the removal of signs as part of its regular highways maintenance. Before any sign is removed, a formal risk assessment is recorded that takes into account the likelihood and severity of a possible accident that may result. Each assessment and decision is kept on record for use in case of future enquiries and to monitor the results.
- 2.5 Since the March Guildford committee we have also been in contact with Norfolk County Council with a view to trialling their approach within our study. The Norfolk project has resulted in the removal of around 600 redundant road signs which is anticipated to result in significant financial savings over time through reduced maintenance costs and staff time.
- 2.6 As the rural economy is important for residents and visitors there is also an opportunity to consider the promotion of businesses and the most appropriate use of Brown Tourist Signs in the area.

3. OPTIONS:

3.1 Elements of the study and possible solutions could include:

Investigating and defining preferred HGV routes through area and identifying unsuitable HGV routes which could be developed as quiet lanes.

- Working with Parish Councils to identify HGV issues and consider measures which conserve and enhance the rural character of country lanes
- Developing area wide destination signing, including HGV and brown signs, and review condition of existing signs and lines
- Trialling the Norfolk County Council risk assessment approach to auditing all road signs in the area to: identify redundant signs or street furniture; to minimise clutter; and clarify signing needs
- Promoting the shared use of the area, including the NCN and Public Rights of Way Network, for cyclists, walkers and equestrians

4. CONSULTATIONS:

- 4.1 The project will be delivered in collaboration with the Local Highways Team and the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Quiet Lanes and De-cluttering Working Group.
- 4.2 Consultation will involve all relevant parish councils, district and county members.

5. FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 Initial costs for the study can be absorbed through existing revenue budgets. The Surrey Hills AONB Board will provide some technical support and training based on the Norfolk approach through Colin Davis Associates.
- 5.2 Collaboration with the Surrey Hills Quiet Lanes and De-cluttering Working Group and involvement of parish councils is expected to reduce officer time on the project.
- 5.3 Proposed measures arising from the study will have to be considered by the local committee or for inclusion within the Local Transport forward programmes or other funding streams, including those that can be accessed direct by parish councils.
- 5.4 Based on the Norfolk example, the outcome will lead to significant savings on the need to repair or replace signs and lines. This approach could be rolled out to other parts of the Surrey Hills AONB and rural Surrey.

6. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 No significant implications from this project.

7. LOCALISM:

- 7.1 The project will be community driven through the involvement of Parish Councils in the identification of issues and potential solutions.

8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Crime and Disorder	No significant implications arising from this report.
Sustainability (including Climate Change and Carbon Emissions)	Set out below.
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No significant implications arising from this report.
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	No significant implications arising from this report.
Public Health	No significant implications arising from this report.

8.1 Sustainability implications

The proposed scheme aims to conserve and enhance country lanes and promote the off-road network so that they are more suitable for use by sustainable transport modes (walking, cycling, and horse riding).

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Conclusions:

- 9.1 A certain amount of HGV activity on this area's rural road network is inevitable due to agriculture, local business activity, and the need for local deliveries.
- 9.2 It is expected that some HGV related problems on country lanes can be eased by a combination of: low cost measures identified through discussions with Parish Councils and the Working Group to conserve and enhance the safe use of country lanes for all users.

Recommendations:

The Local Committee (Guildford) is asked to:

- (i) Endorse the study approach for identifying and addressing rural HGV issues; &
- (ii) Support the proposed direction of the project to coordinate this project with the work of the Surrey Hills AONB Quiet Lanes and De-Cluttering Working Group including trialling the decluttering approach developed by Norfolk County Council.

10. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- 10.1 A review of current direction signing
- 10.2 Advise all county and district members and parish councils within the study area of the aims of the project and invite them to contribute. This will include an invitation to relevant parish councils to the next Working Group of the Surrey Hills Quiet Lanes and Decluttering Working Group in Albury on 5th October and a presentation at the Surrey Association of Local Councils AGM on 15th October.
- 10.3 At the end of the study a list of recommendations will be brought back to a future meeting of this committee and adjoining district committees.
- 10.4 Proposed measures resulting from the study will be considered for inclusion within the Local Transport Strategy forward programme or other appropriate funding stream.

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Consulted:

- The project has been developed through consultation with Rob Fairbanks, the Surrey Hills AONB director, John Hilder the Local Highway Manager for south west Surrey and John Pateman, Systems and Services Improvement Team Leader.
- The project will include consultation and training with the Local Highways and Road Safety Engineering Team.
- As the project progresses all county and district councils members and parish Councils within the study area will be consulted.

Sources/background papers:

- Shere, Area Rural Heavy Goods Vehicle Review, Guildford Local Committee - 25 March 2015.