

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL
LOCAL COMMITTEE (GUILDFORD)



DATE: 22 June 2016

LEAD OFFICER: Peter Hitchings

SUBJECT: Shere Rural Area HGV review and de-cluttering project
 (For decision on de-cluttering aspect)

DIVISION: DIVISION(S) AFFECTED

Shere, Albury and Shalford. (Guildford)

Also Dorking Hills (Mole Valley) and Cranleigh and Ewhurst
 (Waverley)

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

This item reports progress on the combined rural HGV review and de-cluttering project being carried out in the central area of the Surrey Hills AONB, currently focussed mainly within the Parishes of Shere, Ewhurst and Albury.

Parish Councils in this area, and the wider area bounded by the A25/A29/A281/A248 have been central in developing proposals to reduce and manage HGV activity and identify and reduce superfluous road signs and roadside clutter.

The Parish Councils agreed to defer a report to this committee on a package of HGV management measures until a later meeting, pending further traffic surveys and consultations with Surrey Police on the feasibility of HGV restrictions.

Mindful of the extensive work already being carried out by Parish Councils in identifying superfluous road signing, and the recent changes in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD, 2016), which gives further legislative support to this work, it was decided to bring a report on the decluttering aspect of this project to this committee to ensure that the momentum of this work as a pilot study is maintained.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Local Committee (Guildford) is asked to agree:

- (i) the implementation of road signing decluttering proposals developed through a risk assessment process trialled by parish councils, subject to appropriate sign off from Surrey Highways and available funding
- (ii) the continuation of a collaborative approach supporting Parish Councils to identify rural HGV and traffic issues and that a further

report is brought back to this committee

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Parish councils, with their in depth knowledge of their locality, are ideally placed to play a central role in identifying superfluous signing and street furniture and a number have already been trialling the Norfolk risk assessment process.

Much work on decluttering audits by parish councils has now taken place and so it would be timely to complete and review the trial assessment process before rolling out the initiative to other areas.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

Possible 7.5 tonne weight restriction

- 1.1 A feasibility study of HGV activity in the area of the AONB between Shere and Ewhurst was carried out in 2015 to determine whether a 7.5 tonne lorry ban was feasible and/or to determine the most appropriate routes for HGVs to be directed through this area.
- 1.2 The feasibility study considered a number of options for a 7.5 tonne ban but concluded that a ban covering a small area around the key routes would force large vehicles onto even more restricted and less suitable roads. A ban over a more extensive area, covering the study area indicated above was also considered but the low numbers of HGV's spread over multiple routes would make it extremely difficult to enforce and unlikely to be regarded as a high priority by the police.
- 1.3 The feasibility study concludes that no roads through this area are ideal for HGV's and that the most appropriate solution would be to direct HGV's around the periphery of the area, and onto the A road network as soon as possible. It is proposed to support this with entry signs to create a rural "quiet lane zone" where all roads within are regarded as unsuitable as through routes for HGV's.

Consultations on HGV movements with Ewhurst, Shere and Albury Parish Councils

- 1.4 Joint discussions have taken place with these three Parish Councils as their areas would be directly affected by any changes to HGV routeing brought about through the above study.
- 1.5 These Parish Councils have expressed the preference for an HGV ban to be implemented throughout the area. Though mindful that it may not be effectively enforced they nonetheless felt that it would act as a deterrent to unsuitable vehicles.
- 1.6 The three parish council all agreed to defer the report on HGV proposals pending further discussions with the police a review of HGV numbers.

Wider HGV assessment and Surrey Hills Quiet Lane and Decluttering Project

- 1.7 In March 2015 the Guildford committee agreed to progress a wider assessment of HGV issues coordinated with the ongoing Surrey AONB quiet lanes a decluttering working group who are largely working within the same study area.

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- 1.8 Coordinating the HGV study with the Surrey Hills quiet lanes and de-cluttering project has streamlined consultations and ensuring 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.
- 1.9 The current focus of the project is on piloting a replicable process for reducing superfluous road signs. A more comprehensive report will be brought back to the committee with recommendations for implementing HGV mitigation measures and for the further development of the de-cluttering process.

2. ANALYSIS:

- 2.1 The number of road signs on roads in England more than doubled from 2.45 million in 1993 to an estimated 4.57 million in 2013. A certain amount of de-cluttering work has already been carried in areas of rural and urban Surrey in recent years. This type of work was given greater significance through the publication of the government Policy document, Signing the Way (2011) which stressed that there has been an overprovision of road signs and that new signing should only be introduced when absolutely necessary
- 2.2 Earlier this year the government updated and republished the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD, 2016) giving further legislative support to the decluttering process and simplifying the rules councils need to follow when considering installing or removing road signs. The government predict the new rules will save councils in England £30 million by 2020.
- 2.3 In 2015, Norfolk County Council won the national Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation award for their rural road sign clutter reduction project. 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.
- 2.4 Surrey County Council has consulted Norfolk County Council and has received their agreement to trial their process within the Surrey Hills de-cluttering project. The Norfolk risk assessment process has been modified for our use and forms a central part of sign audits being carried out by parish councils. The form being used is shown as **ANNEX A**. The parish sign audits will be passed to Surrey Highways for consideration and sign off before any work is carried out.
- 2.5 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. Within Surrey, Albury Parish Council has surveyed over 60 signs in their area, identifying 25 for possible removal which indicates the scale of potential saving over the wider study area. The work of the parish councils, with their depth local knowledge, has been invaluable in identifying superfluous road signs in the study area.

3. OPTIONS:

- 3.1 This report only seeks agreement on the development of a pilot process for reducing sign clutter. A further more comprehensive report will be brought to the committee on the wider aspects of the project and options for mitigating HGV issues.

4. CONSULTATIONS:

- 4.1 The project is being 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 Discussions have taken place with Norfolk County Council to obtain permission to trial their road sign risk assessment process in Surrey
- 4.3 Consultations are ongoing with parish councils and local district and county members.

5. FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 Initial costs for the study have been absorbed through existing revenue budgets. The Surrey Hills AONB Board are financing 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 has reduced officer time on the project.
- 5.3 A preliminary budget of £8000 to include some decluttering work and staff training has been identified from developer contributions and match funding through the Surrey Hills Office.
- 5.4 The implementation of the project is scalable allowing implementation to be carried out incrementally to match available funding.
- 5.5 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 rural and urban Surrey and included within maintenance projects.

6. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 No significant implications from this project.

7. LOCALISM:

- 7.1 Parish councils have been central in the identification of issues and development of potential solutions with the project.

8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Crime and Disorder	No significant implications arising from this report.
Sustainability (including Climate Change	Set out below.

and Carbon Emissions)	
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

8.2 The overall aim of the project is to conserve and enhance country lanes by reducing the number of unnecessary large goods vehicles movements through the area and reducing superfluous redundant road signs and street furniture. It will protect minor country lanes so that they are more suitable for use by sustainable transport modes (walking, cycling, and horse riding).

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Conclusions:

9.1 The work being carried out by parish councils has been invaluable in helping to identify and address rural transport issues and superfluous road signs and contribute to the management of country lanes in a sensitive and cost effective way.

9.2 The Local Committee (Guildford) is asked to agree:

- (i) the implementation of road signing decluttering proposals developed through a risk assessment process trialled by parish councils, subject to appropriate sign off from Surrey Highways and available funding
- (ii) the continuation of a collaborative approach supporting Parish Councils to identify rural HGV and traffic issues and that a further report is brought back to this committee

10. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

- 10.1 A report with further recommendations on the outcome of the HGV study will be brought back to a future meeting.
- 10.2 Training on the de-cluttering risk assessment process and implications of the revisions to TSRGD will be organised for Surrey Highways staff.
- 10.3 The current round of parish sign audits will be assessed, implemented and reviewed before rolling out to other areas.
- 10.4 Proposed measures resulting from the study will be considered for inclusion within Local Transport Strategy forward programme or for implementation by other appropriate funding streams.

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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 colleagues within Surrey Highways on the de-cluttering process and the implications of updates within the republished Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions

County and district councils members and parish councils within the study area.

Sources/background papers:

**SHERE AREA RURAL HEAVY GOODS VEHICLE REVIEW, Guildford Local Committee
25 March 2015.**