

Councillors Briefing Note No. 19-010

Service: Highway and Transport

Further Enquiries to: Spencer Drinkwater

Date Prepared: 28th March 2019

Direct Line: (01225) 713480

FREIGHT STRATEGY AND FREIGHT MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Background

Wiltshire's Freight Strategy was originally adopted in 2000 as part of then Wiltshire County Council's first Local Transport Plan (LTP). It was developed under a very different national policy framework than exists currently. At that time a Road Traffic Reduction Act had been introduced and lorry road-user charging was planned. These legislative tools provided the framework upon which to adopt bold policies for routing HGVs. The resulting Strategy for Wiltshire comprised a two tier system of HGV routing with a grid of strategic freight routes (M4, A303, A350 and A34 to the east of the county) supported by a network of advisory local lorry routes for access to the County's towns. Under this policy, many A and B roads in Wiltshire were not designated as advisory routes for HGVs.

In 2008 the Freight Assessment and Prioritisation Mechanism (FAPM) was adopted in order to prioritise the many requests for freight management (environmental weight limits and restrictions on freight movement) in the county and identify those most in need of freight management and mitigation measures. In 2015, in line with the corporate objective to devolve decision making to our local communities, the area boards were asked to select their freight priorities for assessment under the FAPM.

The current situation

National transport policy has radically changed over the last 10 years and it has proven impossible to deliver the HGV routing aspirations within the Freight Strategy. This change has resulted in our road freight routing policies being out of kilter with current national policies and the local policies of other authorities, many of whom do not undertake freight management or impose weight restrictions on A or B class roads.

The FAPM has been successful in providing an equitable system for scheme prioritisation which has enabled the council to manage requests for freight management. However, recently, the prioritised schemes have been far more difficult to address and the resource implications of undertaking the necessary studies (surveys, data collection and analysis etc) have escalated. Furthermore, for many of the freight management priorities, the studies

have shown that there is little scope to deliver mitigation measures and address the HGV issues.

Local Transport Plan and Freight Strategy Review

During 2019 the council will be preparing its fourth Local Transport Plan (LTP4) which will need to cover the Local Plan period between 2026 to 2036. As part of the development of LTP4 the Freight Strategy will need to be reviewed and replaced with a more realistic and contemporary approach that takes account of recent national transport policy changes, such as the advent of the Major Road Network (MRN) and the establishment of the Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body, of which Wiltshire is part.

The production of LTP 4 and the review of the Freight Strategy will take time and resources. The sustainable transport team does not currently have sufficient resources to undertake freight management studies as well as develop and deliver LTP4 (involving reviews of all of the LTP strategies, including the Freight Strategy) and contribute to the development of the council's new Local Plan to 2036. Furthermore, it is not appropriate to continue to use the FAPM to assess and prioritise freight management interventions as those interventions may not accord with the outcome of the review of the council's Freight Strategy.

As such, the application of the Freight Assessment and Prioritisation Mechanism (FAPM) will be suspended until the review of the Freight Strategy has been completed. This will provide the opportunity to reflect on the FAPM's effectiveness, evaluate the outcomes achieved using this process, and decide whether it is fit for purpose under the revised Freight Strategy.

The ongoing freight studies will be concluded but no further freight management studies will be commenced until LTP4 and the review of the Freight Strategy have been completed, which is likely to be in 2020.