

30 SEPTEMBER 2009



## Priority for People

### Creating safety and calm in the Bradford Area:

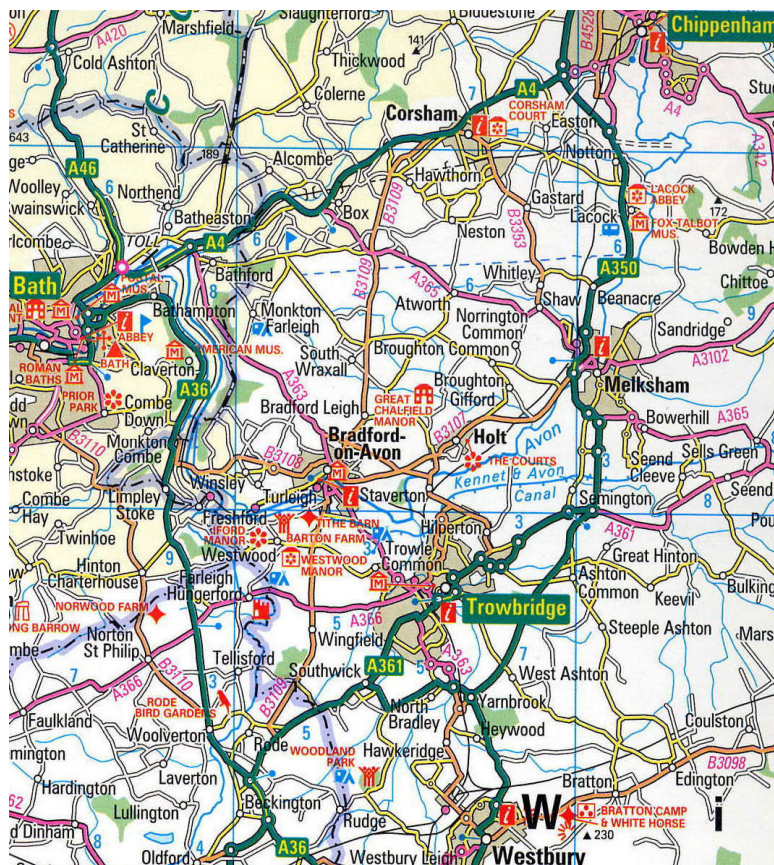
### HGV traffic and signage

#### *Introduction*

**Safety concerns and intimidation of pedestrians and cyclists** by heavy goods vehicles (HGV) in narrow roads have consistently featured highly in surveys and consultation with the residents of Bradford on Avon and the villages in the Bradford Area.

In the Priority for People consultations in 2008 these were the top concerns overall, as they were in a survey of all residents in Holt in 1999 which asked open questions on a very broad range of topics affecting the quality of life of all residents.

The Safer Community action group (part of Priority for People) was formed in 2009, in direct response to these specific concerns.



Strictly, the Bradford Area comprises the following communities:

<b>Bradford on Avon</b>	<b>Holt</b>	<b>Limley Stoke</b>	<b>Monkton Farleigh</b>	<b>South Wraxall</b>
<b>Staverton</b>	<b>Westwood</b>	<b>Wingfield</b>	<b>Winsley</b>	

## ***The main issues***

Although the **weight** of HGVs is often used as a handy reference to their size, it is in fact their **size** that causes almost all of the reported issues:

- Squeezing cyclists off the roads both within Bradford and on the major routes in the Area, notably the A363 and the B3107
- Intimidating pedestrians by mounting pavements (where they exist), by their mirrors striking pedestrians, and by their noise, proximity and sheer bulk.
- Striking parked cars and destroying, for instance, their door mirrors

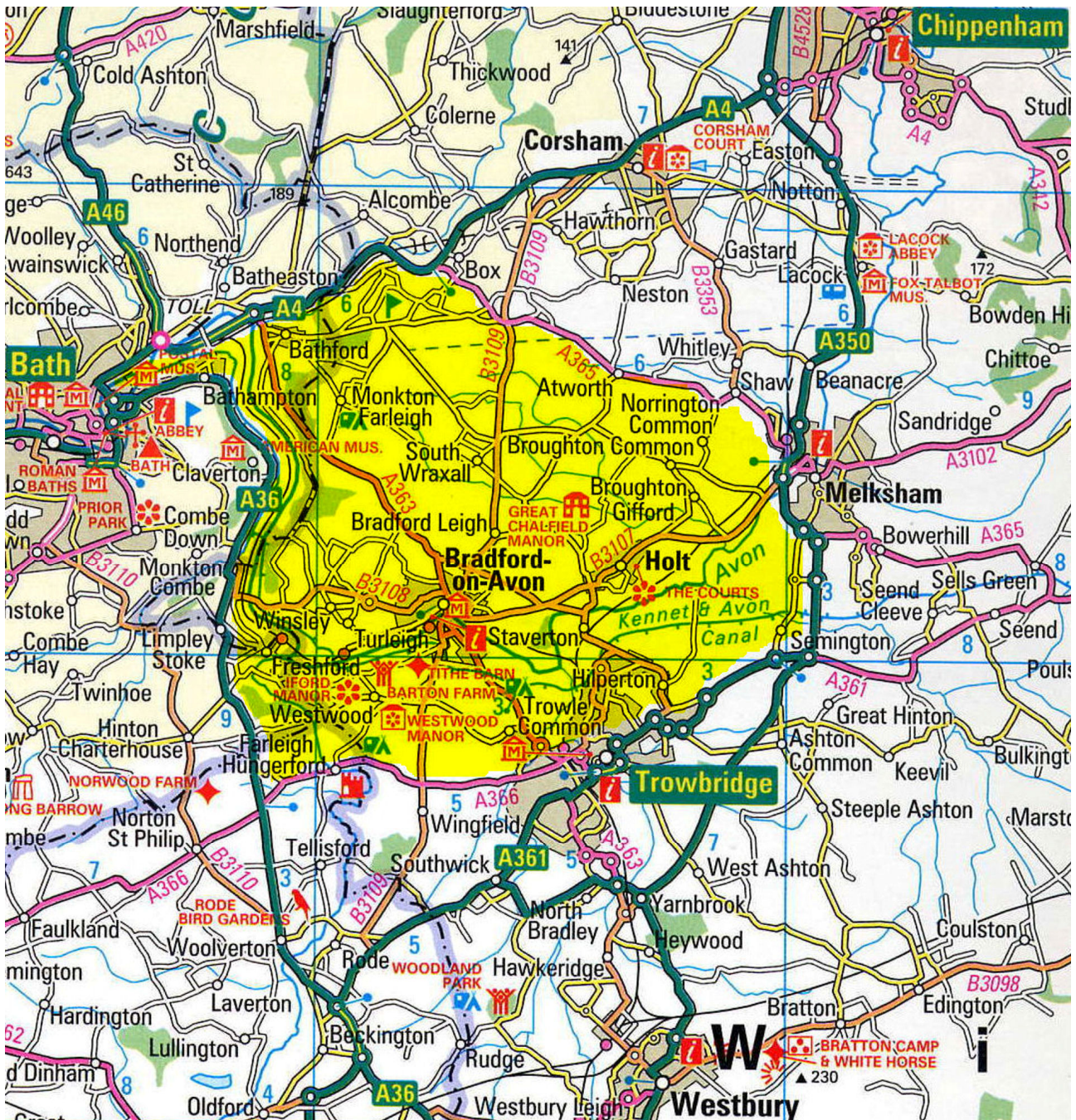
Pollution (especially in Mason's Lane, Bradford on Avon and Staverton) and vibration (especially in Holt and Staverton) are regularly raised as additional nuisances albeit on a lower scale of concern than direct safety and intimidation.

Speed of HGVs has not been raised as a concern – probably because the constricted town and villages are a natural speed regulator for large vehicles.

## ***The approach***

The Bradford Area is naturally bounded by 4 major routes (A4, A350, A36 and A361) and 2 minor routes (A365 and A366) as shown in the map below:





The **Yellow Area** is referred to by us as the **Safety Zone (SZ)** in this proposal. It can be seen the Safety Zone also includes the communities of Bathford, Broughton Gifford and Hilberton as well as traversing Trowbridge.

Large vehicle traffic in the Safety Zone falls into 3 main classifications:

- 1. Traversing traffic**

These are large vehicles which enter the Safety Zone at one gateway and cross right through it, eventually exiting at another gateway.

- 2. Incoming and outgoing traffic**

These are large vehicles which enter the Safety Zone and whose journey terminates at a destination within the Area, and vice versa.

- 3. Local traffic**

These are large vehicles whose journey begins **and** ends within the Safety Zone.

The principal approach has been to understand the flows of these large vehicles and to address what can be done to reduce their effect on the safety and well-being of pedestrians and cyclists in the Area.

### 1. **Traversing traffic**

The objective is to reduce traversing traffic as far as is practical by identifying preferred routes, exploiting major investments in trunk routes, and considering how drivers can best be guided to take them.

### 2. **Incoming and outgoing traffic**

We welcome the economic activity associated with businesses operating within the Safety Zone and at the same time wish to route journeys so as to cause least intimidation to residents. By keeping large vehicles to the most appropriate routes, their journeys will also be safer, in some cases faster, and cause less pollution. In the longer term, Planning Guidelines should direct commercial and industrial development within the Area to places with a direct and appropriate route to one of the gateways of Area, and establish use of this route as a planning condition.

### 3. **Local traffic**

In the short-term we do not see any practical means of reducing the flows of vehicles within the Area, but there may be scope to change the **timing of journeys**, especially through Bradford on Avon which is subject to quite specific “rush-hour” congestion, when car journeys to work and school combine, exacerbated in the morning by deliveries.

## ***Current status***

Three main aspects have been studied for this current proposal:

- Weight limit on the Town Bridge in Bradford on Avon
- Signage
- Vehicular flows

It will be seen these three aspects are inextricably linked.

## **Limit on the Town Bridge in Bradford on Avon**

A weight limit exists on the Town Bridge in Bradford on Avon:

Maximum Gross Weight	18 tonnes (although some signs say 17 tonnes)
Maximum number of axles	2

A survey by Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon over 4 days in July 2008 showed a total of 56 vehicles contravening this limit crossing the Town Bridge, that is to say some 14 per day.

Although this is regrettable, there are some clear explanations for the persistent offences – our conclusions from the signage survey are included here:

- At some of the gateways to the Safety Zone there is no indication of the limits ahead
- Some the signage is inaccurate – quoting the wrong limit
- Most of the correct signs are only visible **after** vehicles have entered the Safety Zone



- Several of the correct signs are sited **after** the last practical opportunity for affected vehicles to take an alternative route (*NB this situation has been improved since this proposal was first drafted but a re-survey has not yet taken place*)
- At only 2 of the 8 main gateways to the Safety Zone are preferred routes indicated
- The signs tend to be very verbose, therefore less likely to be read at all, and most unlikely to be interpretable by foreign drivers
- Only the MGW limit is shown, and informal interviews have – so far – not found a single person with a correct understanding of “18 (or 17?) tonnes MGW” (aside from people working on or close to this project !)
- Nowhere (that we have found) is the axle limit shown
- There is some enforcement of the limits, but enforcement is the last – not the first – resort and is probably the least effective:
  - It is locking the door after the horse has bolted
  - Individual drivers rarely return to a specific place
  - It cannot be cost-effective to have a police officer waiting for hours to catch an overweight vehicle

Having said all that, and having concluded that it is no surprise at all that vehicles cross the Town Bridge “illegally”, the vast majority of intimidating and dangerous traffic traversing Bradford on Avon itself is **large**, not necessarily **heavy** or **having 3 axles or more**.

It is not known at this stage where **SatNav maps** stand in relation to this specific issue.

The conclusion is that there is a major disconnect in the Safety Zone between

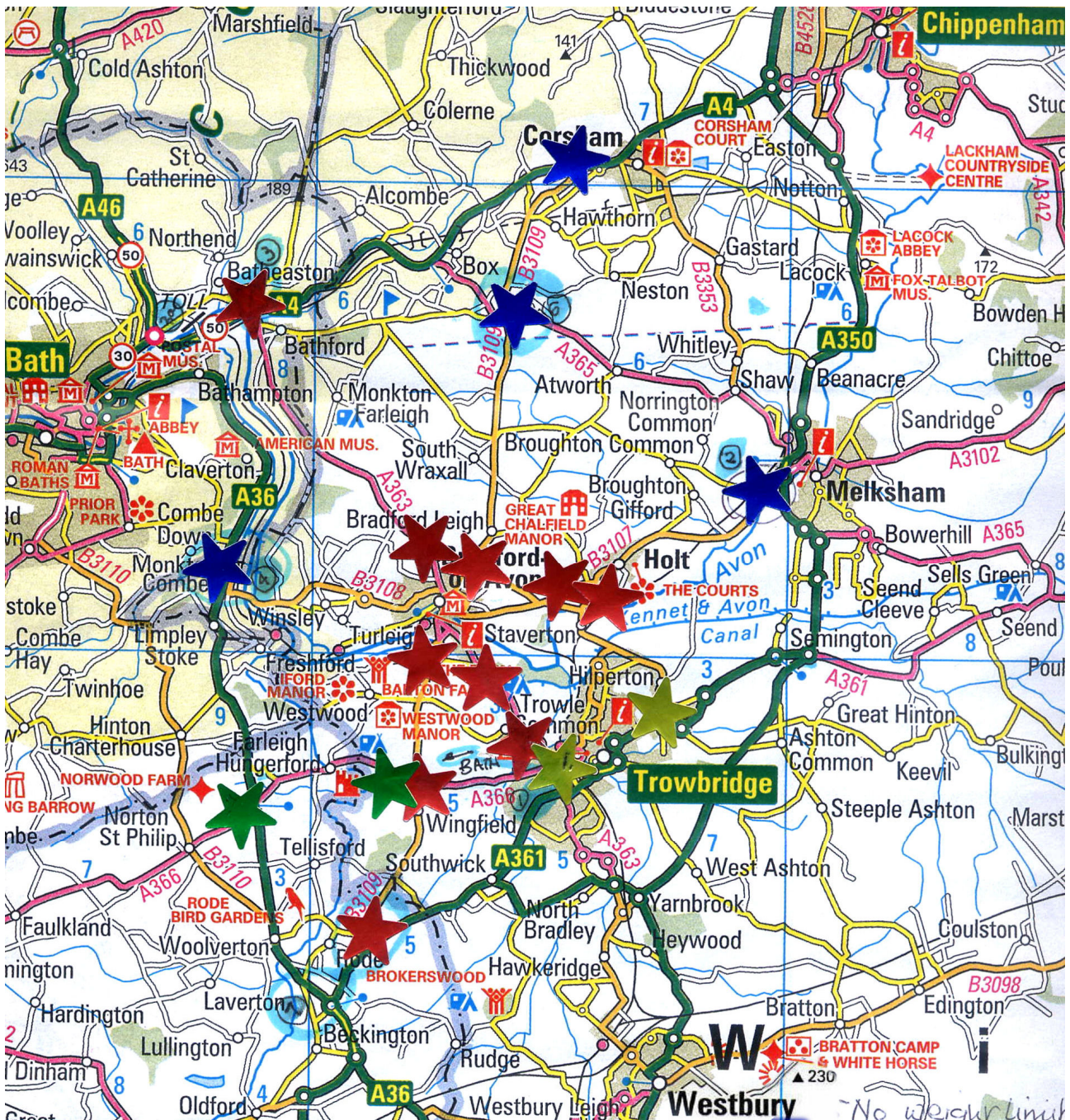
- the perceived problem (large vehicles)
- the existing limits in Bradford and associated signage in the wider area
- route planning
- development planning

Currently available measures seem to be incorrectly applied and/or not focussed on any clear objectives.

## Signage

Inevitably, some aspect of current signage have been covered in the section above on the weight limit.

The map showing the current status is below:



Blue stars      no weight limit shown

Red stars      17.5 ton weight limit shown

Green stars      7.5 ton weight limit shown, referring to the bridge at Farleigh Hungerford

Gold stars      Route to Bath indicated, not through Bradford on Avon

Without wishing to repeat the reasons why large vehicles still traverse Bradford, as above, the major conclusions are clear from the map that:

- The **boundary** of the Safety Zone is very poorly signed
- The concentration of signs is **within** the Safety Zone
- **Preferred routes** are rarely indicated
- Some signs are **inaccurate**
- And at a detail level, too fine for this map, some signs are beyond the “**point of no return**” (*NB this situation has been improved since this proposal was first drafted but a re-survey has not yet taken place*)

## **Vehicular flows**

A long-term study has started, tracking vehicles traversing the Safety Zone.

The methodology is simple – we pick up a vehicle entering the Zone at one of its gateways, and follow it until its destination is clear. By **destination** we mean the final road being taken, not the ultimate stopping point.

The study is “long-term” because this is a lengthy and tedious process. However it is far superior to simple vehicle counts which may indicate the scale of the problem (which are probably known already) but give precious few clues as to the reasons for the flows, and hence possible measures to improve things.

It is accepted that this type of study will not capture any **Local Traffic**. As explained in **The Approach**, above, there is some inevitability about Local Traffic and it is thought that routing measures aimed at Incoming/Outgoing Traffic will be appropriate for Local Traffic too.

Although the rate of acquisition of data is very low, as explained, the patterns seems to be consistent and are not changing significantly as more data is slowly amassed:

### **1. Large vehicles**

HGVs exceeding the limit on the Town Bridge in Bradford on Avon are heavily outnumbered by other trade vehicles. The concentration to date on strict “offenders”, whilst positive, has not been addressing the bulk of the causes of intimidation and safety problems.

The study started to track HGVs only but the methodology will now be changed to include all large vehicles for reasons.

### **2. North – South flows**

At this early stage, it seems that not many large vehicles use the B3109 between Bradford on Avon and Corsham, or the A365 between Box and Atworth.

The A363 from the A4 is heavily used by large vehicles – to date by far the principal destinations have been either:

- a. The Westbury Trading Estate on the A363 via Trowbridge
- b. The A36 Southbound via Wingfield

. . . and vice versa.

This data will be quantified once sufficient has been gathered.

### **3. East – West flows**

From the East, vehicles principally traverse the Safety Zone:



- a. Entering on the B3107 at the roundabout with the A350 at Melksham. Much of this traffic is local, but approximately 25% is split between:
  - i. Turning North at Forewoods Common, on to the A363 towards Bath
  - ii. Turning South in Bradford on to the B3109NB the bulk of this traffic terminates in the Safety Zone, the principal destinations being Staverton and the Canal Road area of Trowbridge.
- b. To date, insufficient vehicles have been logged entering from the A36 via the B3108 past Winsley to draw a meaningful conclusion.

### ***A brief diversion into Psychology***

Informal interviews indicate that the clear “pecking order” of the notice that HGV drivers take of signs is as follows, starting with those that get the most attention:

- Height limits – who wants to be on ‘Points West’, stuck under a low bridge ?
- Width limits – who wants to carry away part of a listed building with their truck ?
- Delays – time is money
- Risk of grounding – also very embarrassing
- Weight limits – with EU pressure about the general fitness of roads and bridges for 44 ton vehicles, many drivers feel that weight limits do not represent real dangers
- No entry except for access, unless “access” is very clearly defined
- Verbose signs

### ***Principal proposals***

Our main proposals are set out below for discussion in the first instance with:

- Wiltshire Council Highways Authority and the Police
- The constituent Town and Parish Councils in the Safety Zone
- Other groups in the Priority for People program of work

In summary, they are to:

1. Adopt the idea of a Safety Zone, as the outer layer of the Historic Core Zone, and as a clear focus for necessary improvements throughout the Bradford Area.
2. Identify options for vehicle limits in the centre of Bradford on Avon and, working closely with the Historic Core Zone project, select the most appropriate to address the observed safety and intimidation issues.
3. Identify preferred routes for large vehicles within and across the Safety Zone.

Following 1 – 3 above:

4. Create simple, graphic signage to give good indication of the restrictions ahead and the preferred routes
5. Work on wider issues such as SatNav maps to support the scheme

We felt that this proposal is simply the wider implementation of the Historic Core Zone and essential to its success, as well as directly addressing the needs of the other Communities in the Bradford Area.



## **Large vehicles**

We see that the reported issues are principally caused by large vehicles. In consultation particularly with the Highways Authority and the HCZ Action group we wish to qualify the possibility and desirability of creating a “width” or other restriction (depending on what is possible and the detailed design of the HCZ) in Bradford on Avon. Advantages include:

- A direct focus on the real issue
- Essential protection for the HCZ
- Direct effect on the communities affected by vehicles traversing the Safety Zone eg
  - Monkton Farleigh
  - Bradford Leigh
  - Holt
  - Staverton
  - Hilperton
  - Wingfield
- Will encourage the identification of appropriate routes for incoming / outgoing traffic flows
- Indirect but significant effect on Local Traffic
- Better reaction to signs from drivers of large vehicles

## **Adoption of the Safety Zone concept**

We found that the Safety Zone concept provided a much-needed way to focus data gathering and measures which can actually improve safety and the level of intimidation.

As we move towards implementation we need to work closely with Wiltshire Council, the Bradford Area Board and the HCZ Action Group to create a better name for what we see as the “greater Bradford area”. The Cotswolds AONB is an example where drivers feel they are entering something quite specific, and where restrictions – ranging from parking to access – are at least explicable and might well be “real”.

## **Gateways**

We have discussed what physical form the gateways at the boundary of the Safety Zone might take, and believe that they should combine with any gateways nearer the HCZ to create a consistent means of slowing and guiding traffic as it heads towards Bradford, and well as serving the needs of tourism.

## **The identification of preferred routes**

We wish to work with Authorities to identify, at gateway to the Safety Zone, the appropriate routes for wide vehicles which ought not to traverse the Safety Zone at all. We believe that work on preferred routes has already been done by the Highways Authority and can be readily incorporated into the Safety Zone concept.

The Westbury Trading Estate is a principal source/destination of large vehicles Bradford on Avon. Some of which could in practice be routed another way. That is, traffic going North could be routed either:

- Along the A350 to/from the M4 Eastbound

- Along the A36 to/from the M4 Westbound, or North on the A46

### **Appropriate restrictions in Bradford on Avon and at Staverton**

As discussed at length above, we see a **size limit**, designed in conjunction with the HCZ and Wiltshire Council, as being the more effective at both:

- Reducing the direct cause of intimidation
- Getting drivers' attention and being simpler to understand

We wish Wiltshire Council and the HCZ group to progress this with us as an integral part of their proposal.

We see the need for a permit system of exceptions covering, for example, buses.

In the longer term, we also see a size restriction as being an appropriate form of control at the bridge across the river Avon at Staverton, once the Hilperton Gap road scheme is completed.

### **Better signage**

There is a great deal of current signage, and it is steadily increasing, but its implementation effectiveness is clearly struggling in the absence of a clear overall strategy for the Bradford Area.

We have created "route descriptions" for each entry route to Bradford town, illustrating some of the key issues. An example – the route from the M4 via the A46 – is attached as a separate document "Route 1". Other route descriptions are available if needed.

We wish to see a wholesale re-examination to the following **clear principles**:

At **each gateway to the Safety Zone**, a clear graphic sign aimed at drivers of heavy and wide vehicles and advising:

1. Of the nature of the area (eg you are now entering the Greater Bradford Historic Area, or whatever the HCZ group consider appropriate)
2. Of restrictions ahead at Bradford for large vehicles (or for heavy vehicles if that remains the plan ☹ ) and any "access only" restrictions.
3. Of alternative/preferred routes North, South, East or West as appropriate at each gateway

We wish to work with the Highways Authority to re-locate inappropriately sited restriction signs **within** the Safety Zone to the above general principles for gateway signs modified as necessary and to design, within the rules, a new standard form of signage at the gateways.

### **Satellite Navigation**

Where preferred routes and appropriate restrictions have been agreed, we look for the support of Wiltshire Council to engage with Satellite Navigation providers, and with hauliers and their trade bodies, as a means of communicating routes and restrictions effectively.

### **Enforcement**

We believe that sensible, clear, simple measures will be largely self-enforcing and that the inevitable few miscreants will not be put off by potential enforcement.

Therefore we are proposing that all the initial effort is put into good, thoughtful design.

Enforcement can then be considered, if necessary, to sweep up any remaining issues.

### **Longer term measures**

Two improvements, possibly on the far horizon, could make a significant reduction in large vehicle traffic in the Safety Zone:

**Trowbridge (Canal Road) and Staverton (Cereal Partners and others)** generate significant large and heavy traffic through Bradford Leigh, Holt, Staverton and Hilperton, and some has been observed crossing Bradford's centre.

Today that traffic, Eastbound, is divided between Hilperton and Holt (to a formal 50/50 arrangement in the case of Cereal Partners).

When the "**Hilperton Gap**" road scheme is completed, we should re-visit the use of the B3107, B3109 and the A363 (Northbound) by this traffic.

Meantime we should not develop traffic routes which work in opposition to this eventual transition.

**The A36** is a major North/South route running conveniently adjacent to the Safety Zone. The principal difficulty with making better use of the A36 lies in the poor access from the A46 to the A36. There has been talk of a link between the two at Batheaston. We need the clear support of Wiltshire Council, working with BANES and Somerset, to progress this proposal as a strategic objective.

It is our view that this would have a much wider and better effect on Bradford town and the Bradford Area than a narrowly focussed Bradford bypass.