

CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT – CLLR R TONGE

DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBOURHOOD AND PLANNING

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**WESTBURY, PROPOSED 7.5 TONNE WEIGHT RESTRICTION ON
STATION ROAD BRIDGE– OBJECTIONS TO PROPOSALS**

Purpose of Report

1. To:
 - (i) Consider objections to the advertised proposals for implementing a structural weight limit of 7.5 tonnes maximum gross weight on Station Road, Westbury.
 - (ii) Recommend the making of the Order as advertised.

Background

2. Westbury Station Bridge is owned and maintained by Network Rail who, under the terms of the 1968 Transport Act, are obliged to ensure the structure is adequate and safe to use for vehicles up to, but not exceeding, 7.5 tonne gross vehicle weight (see **Appendix 2**). There are, of course, many bridges owned and maintained by Network Rail which have a capacity far in excess of their minimum legal obligations and over which traffic is not restricted. However, in those cases where there is no reserve of capacity (above 7.5 tonnes) then the local highway authority, in this case Wiltshire Council, would be responsible for any strengthening works unless a weight restriction is deemed acceptable.
3. Westbury Station Bridge has been assessed as part of the national programme of bridge assessment prompted by central government. Following detailed analysis by both Wiltshire Council and Network Rail a safe load rating of 3 tonnes was agreed. This figure was based on the maximum capacity of the main longitudinal girders albeit with other elements of the structure (secondary cross beams) rated as only being adequate for 7.5 tonnes.
4. A temporary weight restriction of 3 tonnes was implemented in November 2009 to prevent heavy vehicles from crossing the structure in order that the safety of rail and road users was not compromised. Since then, Network Rail has worked up and delivered a strengthening scheme to the main girders to meet their obligation of 7.5 tonnes. In the planning of this work Wiltshire Council took the opportunity to contribute to Network Rail's scheme so that the main longitudinal beams were in fact brought up to full 40 tonne capacity, i.e. over and above Network Rail's 7.5 tonne legal liability. However, the overall rating of the bridge is only increased to 7.5 tonnes, now being limited by the secondary cross beams.

5. Wiltshire Council has commissioned a feasibility study to look at possible strengthening options and costs in order that the entire bridge can safely sustain 40 tonnes. The results of this study will not be known for several months. Any works involving the railway, especially those which may disrupt train movements, have to be planned many months, sometimes even years, in advance and therefore it is unlikely that works will be undertaken until at least 2013/14 and even then progress will depend on availability of funding.
6. The 3 tonne limit on the bridge was a temporary Order and cannot be extended. Any subsequent Traffic Orders have to be permanent, although of course these can be revoked at any time in the future should circumstances change.
7. The Order for the 7.5 tonne weight restriction was advertised as part of the statutory procedure for making Traffic Regulation Orders. As a result of the public advertisement, two letters of objection have been received. These are listed in **Appendix 1**, together with a summary of their comments.

Main Considerations for the Council

8. Consideration needs to be given to the responses received and a decision made on the way forward. The Highway Authority has an obligation to ensure the highway is safe to use; this includes any under strength bridges being protected from the passage of heavy vehicles.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

9. Vehicles in excess of 7.5 tonnes will continue to be diverted via Westbury Town Centre, out to Yarnbrook and back in to the trading estates via Hawkeridge Road. Heavy vehicles will incur additional mileage and emissions.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

10. There are none in this scheme.

Risk Assessment

11. There is no risk to the Council as a result of these proposals.

Financial Implications

12. The implementation costs will be minimal; all of the signs currently in place displaying 3 tonnes will be re-faced with a 7.5 tonne legend. There are funds (circa £3,000) available in this years Structures budget for the implementation of this scheme.

Options Considered

13. To:
 - (i) Implement the proposals as advertised.
 - (ii) Not implement the proposals.

Reason for Proposals

14. The comments set out in **Appendix 1** on the various objections received indicate it is considered appropriate to implement the restriction as advertised.

Proposals

15. That:
 - (i) The restriction be implemented as advertised.
 - (ii) The objectors be informed accordingly.

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

Letters of representation