



High Street – Sevenoaks

HGV Review and Investigation

BRIEFING NOTE

The study of HGV issues in High Street, Sevenoaks has commenced and incorporates the following elements:-

1. A traffic survey to determine the level of through movements, and the volumes of goods vehicle traffic using the routes to gain access to the town centre area.
2. Review of the site to identify types of premises fronting the High Street.
3. Review of the highway and adjoining buildings to identify any damage from vehicles.
4. Questionnaire survey of premises to determine delivery patterns and requirements.
5. Review of goods vehicle operator licences in the Sevenoaks area to identify potential through trips and journeys originating within the study area.

Progress has been made on all of the aspects referred to above, although the delivery questionnaire element has commenced recently, following additional budget approvals. This briefing note focuses largely on the survey of goods vehicle traffic, which was carried out early in November.

HEAVY GOODS VEHICLE STUDY

A study was carried out early in November of goods vehicle traffic using the north/south corridor through Sevenoaks. This identified all goods vehicle traffic entering and leaving the area at A224 Amherst Hill, A225 St Johns Hill, Seal Hollow Road (all north of the town centre) and A225 Riverhill, to the south of the town centre. This briefing identifies highlights from the survey, and a number of key pieces of data are highlighted, as follows:-

- Around 15,000 vehicles are recorded in the 12 hour period, 0700-1900 hrs at A225 Riverhill.
- Of the vehicles recorded at Riverhill, 2% are heavy goods vehicles (defined as over 7.5 tonnes unladen weight).
- Of the 2%, around 9% traveled through the area from north to south or vice versa, and totaled one vehicle in each direction per hour (a total of 29). The majority traveled to or from A225 Riverhill and A225 St Johns Hill.

- Additionally, a further 16% traveled through the area but made a stop on the way, very likely to deliver or collect goods from business premises between the survey points. These totaled less than 2 per hour per direction (a total of 45).
- 44 journeys were observed where heavy goods vehicles entered and subsequently left the survey area at the same location, having spent a period of time, presumably making a delivery/collection from premises. Of these, a number of vehicles were observed to make the same manoeuvre several times in one day. This may be indicative of trips associated with works being carried out in the area.
- Only one vehicle was observed to make a through trip using Seal Hollow Road.
- The volume of buses using the route is not dissimilar to the volume of heavy goods vehicles. These vehicles are often of a similar large size as heavy goods vehicles. Buses are not included in the volumes referred to above.

IN SUMMARY

A relatively small number of through heavy goods vehicle manoeuvres occurs through the High Street at Sevenoaks on a typical week-day. However, the route is classified as a principal road by the County Council, forming a part of the A225. The volume of through traffic goods vehicle traffic is low for a route of this type. As would be expected, a proportion of the goods vehicle traffic present accesses the area in connection with servicing of businesses within the town centre area and its immediate surroundings, and this traffic forms over 75% of the large vehicles in the town centre.

It is possible that some through traffic is caused by vehicles diverting to avoid the low bridge on A225 at Riverhead. Although the restricted height of this bridge, at 14ft 6in (*NB to be checked*) is adequate for most vehicles, including double deck buses, the highest heavy goods vehicles will need to take an alternative route.

Implementation of an environmental weight restriction in the High Street, which could only be posted at either 7.5 or 17 tonnes (legal stipulation), would require a Traffic Regulation Order to be processed. Such a restriction could not, in any case, prohibit vehicles requiring access to premises, and would only restrict through traffic. The enforcement of such a restriction may be difficult owing to the need to prove that a vehicle had travelled through the restricted area and did not stop en route for a legitimate reason.

In the circumstances indicated, it seems likely that the Police may have enforcement issues (we have not approached them on this yet), and in view of the need to use the route to avoid the low bridge at Riverhead, it is highly likely that any TRO advertised would generate objections. Objections to weight restrictions result in the need for a local public inquiry to consider them. Finally, the route is specified by the County Council as an abnormal load route (*NB to be checked*) owing to bridge restrictions in the area, so would need to be retained for this purpose anyway. This could undermine the situation at inquiry in promoting a weight restriction.

The report preparation will continue, with a view to bringing forward appropriate recommendations, following full analysis of the data collection in progress, to manage the impact of large vehicles in the High Street.

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