

SEVENOAKS JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD – SEPTEMBER 2010**MANAGING THE MOVEMENT OF HEAVY GOODS VEHICLES IN SEVENOAKS**

Report of the: Local Transport & Development Manager, Ray Dines

Status: To advise Members

Chairman: Cllr Brazier

Head of Service: Head of KHS Transportation & Development – Behdad Haratbar

Comment: the Joint Transport Board (JTB) are advised that an Experimental Traffic Order is to be implemented to impose a 7.5 tonne weight limit, except for the purposes of loading and unloading, along High Street, Sevenoaks between the junction with Pembroke Road and the junction with A224 London Road. The Experimental Order will come into effect in October 2010, and is proposed to be in place for 18 months. A six-month period of consultation will commence once the weight limit ban comes into effect.

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of an Experimental Traffic Order proposed to address environmental (air quality) concerns associated with the movement of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) through Sevenoaks town centre.
- 1.2 Information presented within the body of this report is supported by survey work conducted in Sevenoaks to assess the significance of large goods vehicle movements in / around the town centre. Available data / information has been supplemented by technical expertise of consultants Jacobs to assist the Sevenoaks Transport and Development team in the derivation of a workable solution.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 Concern has been expressed from various quarters regarding the movement of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV) within Sevenoaks town centre, which has prompted a study to be undertaken to determine the relative significance / impact of goods vehicle movements on the town centre. In particular, HGV movements have been cited as an influencing factor behind impacts on historical buildings and poor local air quality.

3.0 Background

i) Air quality concerns / local congestion

3.1 The A225 High Street in Sevenoaks Town Centre has been identified locally as an area that experiences congestion. Road traffic is the main contributor to poor air quality and the level of road traffic; in particular through-traffic which is largely outside the control of the District.

3.2 A total of 11 AQMAs have been declared within the Sevenoaks district and the Council has an Air Quality Action Plan that includes measures to improve air quality. In 2006 an AQMA was declared for traffic related NO₂ exceedance relating to the A225 Sevenoaks High Street (AQMA location 10).

ii) Study to assess goods vehicle movements through Sevenoaks town centre

3.3 An origin and destination study of goods vehicle traffic travelling through Sevenoaks was carried out during November 2009. The survey was carried out over the time period 0700 – 1900 hours, and observations were taken of goods vehicle traffic entering and leaving the cordon at four locations, as follows:-

- A224 Amherst Hill – north of Sevenoaks town centre and south of A25 Riverhead Square
- A225 St Johns Hill – north of Sevenoaks town centre and south of A25 Bat and Ball junction
- A225 Riverhill – south of Sevenoaks town centre and north of A21 Morley's Interchange
- B2019 Seal Hollow Road – north-east of Sevenoaks town centre and south of A25

3.4 During a 12-hour survey period a total of 300 HGVs (two-way) were recorded at A225 Riverhill. The total goods vehicles travelling through Sevenoaks town centre that made a delivery or stop en route totalled 123 vehicles.

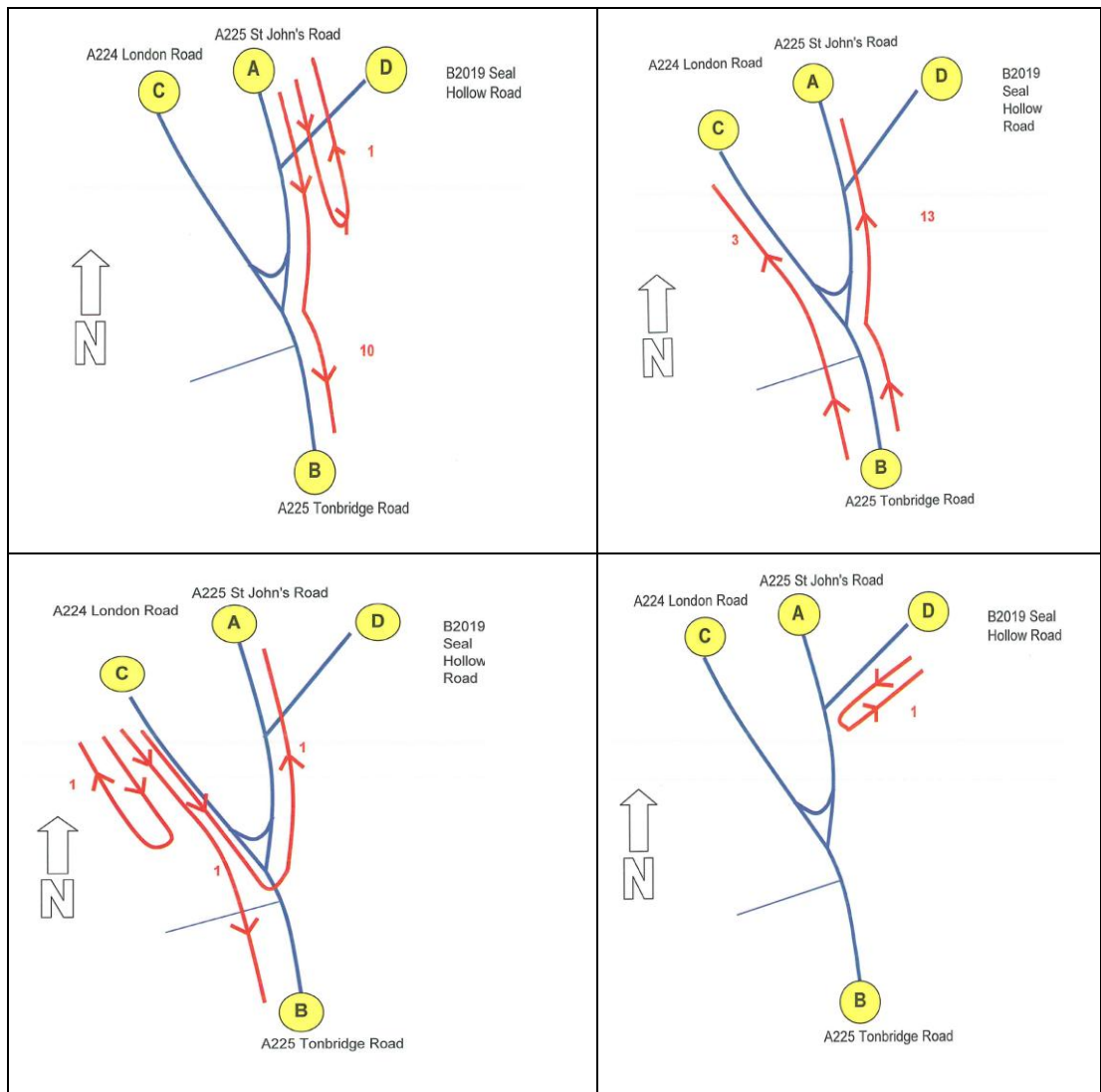
3.5 The study found that only 24 through-HGV movements occurred along A225 High Street, Sevenoaks on a typical weekday. This volume of movements is considered to be low for a route of this type (Principal County Road). This observed level of goods traffic equates to one vehicle in each direction per hour passing through Sevenoaks town centre.

3.6 The study also advised that a significant proportion (~ 75%) of the recorded goods vehicle traffic movements were associated with serving local businesses within the town centre and its immediate surroundings. On the survey day, a total of 44 journeys were observed where HGVs entered and

subsequently left the survey area at the same location, having presumably undertaken delivery / collection from premises. The study also recorded that a number of vehicles made the same manoeuvre several times in one day, which may be indicative of trips associated with works being carried out in the area.

- 3.7 Only one HGV was observed to make a through trip using Seal Hollow Road (this route has advisory signing indicating its unsuitability for heavy goods vehicles). This suggests that the advisory signing that is in place has a positive effect.

Figure 1. Schematic diagrams to show the through-movement of HGVs associated with Sevenoaks town centre



- 3.8 The above schematic diagrams show the through-movement of HGVs within a 12-hour period between 07:00 and 19:00. The diagrams show that the majority of such movements relate to southbound movements along the A225 St John's Hill / High Street / Tonbridge Road (10) and northbound

movements in the opposite direction using the A225 Tonbridge Road / High Street / St John's Hill (13).

- 3.9 It is possible that some through traffic is caused by vehicles diverting to avoid the low bridge on A25 at Sunny Bank near Riverhead. Although the restricted height of this bridge, at 14ft 9in, is adequate for most vehicles including double deck buses, the highest heavy goods vehicles will need to take an alternative route. There is another bridge on A25, near Platt, which has a height restriction of 15ft 0 in., and also results in some vehicles diverting to avoid it.

4.0 Experimental Traffic Regulation Order, High Street, Sevenoaks

- 4.1 An Experimental Traffic Order to implement a 7.5 tonne weight limit restriction is to be implemented in October 2010 to ban the through-movement of HGVs through Sevenoaks town centre on the A225 High Street between the junctions with Pembroke Road and A224 London Road.

- 4.2 Access for HGVs will still be permitted under the provisions of the Experimental Order for the purposes of loading and unloading along High Street, Sevenoaks (i.e. within the area to which the weight limit ban will apply).

- 4.3 Key information about the experimental weight limit ban is bulleted below:

- The scheme should eliminate 85% (i.e. almost all) HGVs using Sevenoaks town centre as a through-route
- The scheme is to be reviewed to identify changes in both air quality and the number of through-HGV movements once the experimental weight limit ban has been operational for a period of time. Subject to future survey findings (as well as any representations received during the consultation process), the scheme could be reviewed / enlarged, as appropriate (subject to approval from the JTB to proceed)
- Advanced warning signs are to be installed at key 'gateway' locations to Sevenoaks town centre, to include A224 Riverhead, A25 Bat and Ball, A225 Riverhill, A21 Morley's Roundabout, with the restriction signs at either end of the High Street, as shown in **Figure 2** overleaf.
- Kent Police are prepared to enforce the experimental weight limit ban
- Other scheme options were reviewed and consulted upon with Kent Police. The alternative schemes were not favourably received by Kent Police due to practical enforcement difficulties
- The alternative scheme options would conflict with the tactical diversion route status of the A225 / A224 (refer the figure on page

4 of Enclosure 4). The supported scheme would not result in such conflict with the tactical diversion route

4.4 Figure 2 below shows the extent of the ETRO ban.

Figure 2. Extent of the ETRO weight limit ban, High Street, Sevenoaks



4.5 A road test is to be performed prior to the September 2010 JTB meeting to clarify whether HGVs can effectively perform a right-turn manoeuvre from A224 London Road to Pembroke Road as a result of the current junction configuration / layout. Subject to the findings of the road test, possible minor modifications to the A224 London Road / Pembroke Road junction could be required. It is intended that a verbal update on the outcome of the road test will be provided at the September 2010 JTB meeting.

4.6 An explanation of the key principles behind an experimental traffic regulation order is provided below.

i) What is an Experimental Traffic Order?

4.7 An experimental Order¹ is much like a permanent Traffic Regulation Order in that it is a legal document which imposes traffic and parking restrictions. Unlike a Permanent Order an Experimental Order can only stay in force for a maximum of 18 months while the effects of the ban are monitored and assessed (and changes made if necessary), before the Council decides whether or not to continue the experimental order on a permanent basis.

¹ An Experimental Traffic Order is made under Sections 9 and 10 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 ("the Act") and all other enabling powers after consultation with the chief officer of police in accordance with Schedule 9 to the 1984 Act.

ii) What are the procedures involved in making an experimental traffic order?

- 4.8 Notices must be published in the local newspaper along with notices attached to lamp columns or other street furniture (if appropriate). The Council is also obliged to make a copy of the order and other relevant documents available for public inspection.

iii) Is it possible to object to an experimental traffic regulation order?

- 4.9 It is not possible to lodge a formal objection to an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order until it is in force. Once it is in force, objections may be made to the order being made permanent and these must be made within six months of the day that the experimental order comes into force. The Council will then review any raised objections and make recommendations, as required.

iv) Enforcement of the Experimental Order

- 4.10 The West Kent Police Traffic Management Team will play a crucial role regarding the enforcement of the ETRO. The police also have a responsibility to perform when a tactical diversion is enacted following an incident on / planned closure of the A21 Sevenoaks bypass. On such instances, the Police have the authority under their statutory powers to effectively suspend the Sevenoaks Experimental Order when the tactical diversion route is to be brought into effect.

v) Movement of large goods vehicles that exceed local height limits

- 4.11 For those vehicles that, due to local height restrictions, are unable to pass under the Riverhead Bridge on Maidstone Road, the intended diversion route is via the A225 St Johns Hill/Dartford Road, Pembroke Road and A224 Tubs Hill / London Road for both directions.

vi) The 'experimental' nature of the Order

- 4.12 As the term "experimental" implies, the order is to be implemented on an experimental basis, with ongoing monitoring to record, assess and establish the effectiveness of the weight restriction ban, both in alterations to traffic volumes and air quality. This can inform future decisions on making the experimental order permanent.
- 4.13 It is proposed that a report to the JTB will be submitted in March / April 2011 to provide Members with an update following the implementation of the experimental order. An update will enable Members to determine if the experimental order should be continued for the 18-month period without change, should be continued with modifications, or otherwise cancelled.
- 4.14 It should be noted that as a result of recent press coverage some local residents have already contacted Kent Highway Services over concerns about potential knock on impacts in areas such as Riverhead, London Road and Pembroke Road.

5.0 Monitoring / future survey work

- 5.1 It is proposed that a repeat 12-hour HGV survey is to be conducted in November 2010 at the same locations surveyed for the November 2009 survey. The collected data will allow for a “before and after” comparison of goods vehicle movements about Sevenoaks urban centre following the implementation of the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order in October 2010.
- 5.2 Kent Highway Services are to also work in partnership with the Air Quality Team at Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) to obtain (and record) air quality levels within the study area both before and after the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order is brought into effect.
- 5.3 In order to gather robust data, it will be important to ensure that air quality monitoring is undertaken for a sufficient period of time to account for any possible fluctuations in air quality levels over the survey period.

6.0 Enclosures

1. High Street, Sevenoaks: HGV Review and Investigation, Jacobs report (November 2009)
2. A225 High Street, Sevenoaks, Heavy Goods Vehicle Traffic Investigation (April 2010)
3. Air Quality Management Area for Sevenoaks town centre
4. Tactical Diversion Routes – A21 Westerham – Flimwell, Highways Agency