

Notes of the Working Group Inquiry held on 20 October 2015

Present: David Loades (Chairman)

Attendance	
Tim Corbett	Geoff Martin
Carol Dean	Simon Tagg
	Martyn Tittley

Also in attendance: Mark Deaville – Cabinet Support Member for Highways and Transport, Bob Fraser and Michael Greatorex

Apologies: Len Bloomer

PART ONE

24. 10:00 Welcome, Introductions and Housekeeping (15 minutes)

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and the Working Group Members introduced themselves.

25. 10:10 Background and Scope of Review (15 minutes)

Councillor Tittley referred to the report that he had commissioned via the Highways Service from Amey which provided an Option Review on an A515 Weight Restriction, Wood End Lane to the B5017. He made the following points;

- That the report had not mentioned the impact of Heavy Goods/Commercial Vehicles (HG/CVs) on local people or dwellings.
- There was an issue with how connectivity should work. A compromise was required where HG/CVs travelled on major roads.
- The A38 was suffering as it needed to be widened and improved.
- There were lots of options and it was hoped that the inquiry session would be an opportunity to find out what it was like to have HG/CVs travelling through villages day and night, seven days a week.
- By 2020 Councils would be funded by Non Domestic Rates so needed distribution warehouses.
- Staffordshire benefited from the employment opportunities that the distribution industry could bring.
- There was a shortage of HG/CV drivers.
- There were not enough lorry parks with the required facilities for drivers in the county.

It was clarified by the Community Infrastructure Manager that the report had been prioritised through the Divisional Highways programme and that it was a technical report. More details would be presented in the second inquiry session.

26. 10:25 What is the impact of heavy goods/commercial vehicles on roads and how are they affecting communities in Staffordshire. (60 minutes)

The Chairman welcomed representatives from Kings Bromley, Yoxall and Draycott in the Clay Parish Councils and Yoxall Action Group.

Steve Browne, Kings Bromley Parish Council, explained that;

- Since 2011, vehicles travelling through Kings Bromley had increased in size, volume and weight.
- In 2014 Parishioners asked the Parish Council to do something about this and an action group was formed with Yoxall and Draycott in the Clay Parish Councils.
- The T-Junction with the A515 and A513 was at the centre of Kings Bromley.
- In 1985 the A515 was straightened out and widened which enabled lorries to travel through quicker and faster.
- In 2001 Build Outs were added to slow the traffic down, however at night vehicles went between them.
- In 2009 a pedestrian crossing was installed so that children on the west of the village could cross over safely but this had been knocked down twice in two years by HG/CVs.
- Over nine hundred signatures were received on a petition demanding a seven and half tonne weight restriction on the A515 and auxiliary roads between Wood End Lane, Kings Bromley and Stubby Lane, Draycott in the Clay. Kings Bromley consisted of approximately five hundred residences. Everyone supported the petition because, property and health was suffering and people's safety was in danger.
- Grade 2 listed buildings were not designed to cope with the current lorry loads, lengths, vibration and noise. Properties were suffering cracked walls and ceilings.
- People had to sleep with their windows shut due to the noise, vibration and fumes of passing HG/CVs.
- The T-Junction had been in place since 1922. It was designed when the current lorry was not anticipated. Lorries had to cross and mount the footpath and swing into the other half of the road to negotiate the bend.
- In a twenty four hour period sixteen fully blocked out junctions, where lorries met one another and no one could move, were recorded.
- There is a school in the village with one hundred and thirty pupils. Parents were concerned about the safety of children.
- The Pedestrian Crossing had been knocked down and people had had to risk their lives to get across the road. It was knocked down at 4pm in the afternoon and at 5pm the school had reported this to Highways. At 6am the following morning the situation was reported to the Police via 101 and it was requested that a Police Officer attend to support people to cross the road, this had not however happened. Highways fixed the crossing within a forty eight hour period.
- Kings Bromley was an old village with narrow footpaths. Lorries coming past at 30mph caused back draft which sucked people towards the lorry. A case was referred to where by a lorry had been travelling so close to a pedestrian it had caught her handbag.
- Lorries passed through the village at speed and some drivers did not take note of the red lights.

- Pedestrians on the east side of the village had to walk down the road and cross the A513 to get to the school. This was dangerous as there was no crossing.
- A count was undertaken over a twenty four hour period. Ford transits, buses, farm vehicles and waste refuse trucks were excluded. The count did not take place on Mondays which were light days for vehicles and Fridays which was a heavy day. The count was undertaken over a two week period at different timeslots. Nine hundred and thirty one vehicles over seven and a half tonne travelled through the village in a twenty four hour period. Sixty four vehicles weighing over seven and a half tonne travelled through between 8am and 9am when children were being taken to school, fifty one vehicles travelled through as children finished school between 3pm and 4pm. The busiest time for vehicles over seven and half tonne travelling through the village was between 4am and 7am. The count was undertaken in three separate directions, these being Lichfield to Yoxall, Alrewas to Yoxall and Lichfield to Alrewas.
- Lorries caused severe damage to buildings. An example was provided where by the residents had to remove ornaments off the mantelpiece to prevent them falling off due to the vibration of passing vehicles. People were concerned about their properties.
- Ninety one percent of vehicles were articulated lorries and therefore had no choice but to mount the pavement and swing over to the other side of the road.
- Lorries were travelling through Yoxall and negotiating the T-Junction to get to the Fradley industrial park. They were also taking this route at night when they left the park to join the A38 in Alrewas.
- Drivers had reported that they could not get up to speed to get on the A38 at Hilliard's Cross and it was suggested that this feeder road should be lengthened.
- Alternative routes were available. If Hilliard's Cross was improved lorries could get on the A38. Lorries coming out of the Fradley Industrial Park that continued to go up Wood End Lane would have to turn left and go down to the A50 to get to the North West.
- The A515 was considered shorter and more fuel efficient by lorry drivers, however from Fradley Industrial Estate along the A515 there were twenty three gear changes and eighteen obstacles. Travelling along the A50, was nine miles longer, but took only four mins extra to complete and a consistent speed of 50mph could be maintained.
- A professional driver had undertaken a risk assessment and agreed that the better and less risky route to use was the A50 and A38 which avoided Kings Bromley, Yoxall and Draycott in the Clay.

David Harrison, Yoxall Action Group explained that;

- The Group had formed eight years ago and had supported the Kings Bromley petition.
- There was a disconnect between the people of Kings Bromley and Yoxall, and the County Council.
- The anger of local people had resulted in the petition.
- It was accepted by all that the A515 was no longer fit for purpose.
- HG/CV operators were putting profit before safety because the A515 was a quicker and shorter route, however the A50 and A38 were better designed to take HG/CVs.

- The existing roads were compared to the current criteria. The carriageway width should be a minimum of 7.3m but was less than 6m wide throughout the village and at certain points was just 5.25m. HG/CVs were 2.55m wide so it was obvious that two vehicles could not pass one another at the same time.
- Stress points occur at double bends in the village. At these points the effective width of the carriageway is 4m so it is impossible for two lorries to pass one another and they have to mount the pavement and go onto the other side of the road to get round the bends.
- There are S bends next to the school which is also a blind spot.
- In May there were three near misses at the same point in the village. In one instance a mother had had to throw her children over a wall and in another a local resident had had to jump over the wall. There had been a major collision and the church wall had been damaged as a vehicle had mounted the pavement and gone into the wall.
- The only position in the village where there was a crossing was on a double blind bend where lorries mounted the curb and it was impossible for lorries to go round on the right side of the road.
- At one point the carriageway is less than 6m wide and the footpath is 400mm wide. People using mobility scooters cannot navigate from one end of the village to the other.
- A Department of Transport publication issued by the Health & Safety Executive entitled 'Managing work related road safety' asks do you plan routes thoroughly, could you use safer routes which are more appropriate for the type of vehicle doing the journey? It stated that; 'although minor roads are fine for cars they are less safe and cause difficulties for larger vehicles'.

Robert Keys, Yoxall Parish Council stated that his views reflected those previously presented. He suggested that the Working Group should consider;

- Why drivers were taking the A515 and where they were going to.
- Why drivers were not getting on the A38 at Hilliard's Cross.

Mark Flavell, Draycott in the Clay Parish Council stated that;

- There was support for the proposed weight restriction and Draycott in the Clay had also gathered signatures.
- The numbers of HG/CVs going through Yoxall and Kings Bromley each day were up to one thousand however the Department of Transport had suggested that sixty percent more vehicles would be going through Draycott in the Clay than in Yoxall and in Kings Bromley.
- The proposed weight restriction would not remove all HG/CV traffic from the village but would remove the vast majority.
- The negative impact of HG/CVs was significant. They caused a nuisance and danger particularly to cyclists and pedestrians.
- Footpaths were very narrow and pedestrians would get the back draft from HG/CVs passing by.
- A well used play park was situated in the village and children from the neighbouring village also cycled to it.
- Fifteen noise readings were taken outside a house in the middle of Draycott in the Clay, just by A515, when HG/CVs passed by. All reading were above eighty

five decibels and in some cases above ninety decibels. For an exposure limit above eight five decibels it was suggested that people wear hearing protection.

- Traffic goes through the village at at least 40mph rather than 30mph as in the other villages.
- It was a twenty four hour problem with the peak time for HG/CVs passing through the village between 12 and 1am and 5am and 7am.
- The World Health Organisation stated that noise inside should not be above 30 decibels but it is well above this at night time.
- Most houses were on the opposite side of the A515 to the school but there was no pedestrian/zebra/pelican crossings. The lollipop crossing could not be replaced as it was too dangerous.
- Vibration was a significant issue. Homes shook, pictures wobbled and ornaments fell as vehicles when past.
- The issue was getting worse with, increased HG/CV movement at night.
- Conditions of the carriageway were described by Staffordshire County Council as a patchwork which increased vibration and noise.
- There was damage to health as a result of sleep disturbance and anxiety which increased the risk of cardiovascular disease. There were serious affects to the health and wellbeing of adults and children.
- Carriageway resurfacing, reducing the speed limit to 30mph and consideration of a night time ban was suggested.
- The Amey report was not a reason to reject the weight restriction proposal. There had been no mention of the impact on people and evidence had been taken from google maps regarding travel time which was incorrect. It was unclear why it was operationally difficult to enforce a weight limit or temporarily disband it when required.
- Staffordshire County Council's mission statement included helping people to be healthy and happy and it was suggested that weight restrictions and other suggestions to ease the problem should therefore be supported.

Alan Howard, Kings Bromley Parish Council, described the unanimity of the Parish and strength of feeling about the issue. People felt that the County Council would not do anything about the situation.

Paul Lovern, Headteacher, Richard Crosse Primary School, expressed concern for the safety of children walking to and from the school which was situated in Kings Bromley. This created a parking issue. Children were encouraged to walk to school and walk to school independently in later years however parents were reluctant for them to do this due to safety reasons. The school was Grade 2 listed and the playing fields were adjacent to the A515 subjecting children to noise pollution. A weight restriction would ensure people in the village had a safer experience.

27. 11:25 Feedback from County Councillors

Councillor Tagg referred to the agenda and his submission describing the situation in the Newcastle Under Lyme area. There were gravel extraction companies in the area and lorries were not taking the designated routes. Signs stating that roads were unsuitable for HGVs were ignored and there was for example a convoy of vehicles regularly taking a short cut to the A500. The situation was frustrating for residents and

Councillors. The difficulties in enforcing designated routes were referred to in the Amey report. It was suggested that local MPs needed to take up the issue in Parliament. The only way companies would make drivers take designated routes was if they were to get fined if they did not and if drivers who flouted the route got points on their license. Adding three minutes to journeys by staying on the major arteries was the way forward. Better legislation and enforcing this through the technology available was suggested.

Councillor Greatorex, explained that he was shocked that the Amey report did not mention people and the affects that HG/CVs were having on them. Local government was being asked to be innovative and tackle issues. This was a prime example of an issue that needed be tackled. Difficulties in enforcement were queried when it was possible to track number plates. There was an emphasis on growth but this had to be considered against how people could live and one matter could not be put before the other. It was hoped that the inquiry would enable a balance of views to be shared, bringing Highways considerations and Parish Councils views to the fore.

Councillor Tittley suggested that a plan could be put together to support enforcement, and operations could take place at certain times of the day. London had defined routes and other areas had restrictions. Growth was important but not at the detriment of local people.

28. 11:40 How are Staffordshire roads and local communities likely to be affected by future plans (45 minutes)

Richard King, Strategic Director of Democratic, Development and Legal, Lichfield District Council referred to;

- The District Council's adopted Local Plan which provided for an additional nine thousand dwellings up until 2029 and increased employment.
- Across the West Midlands region there was a shortfall of thirty seven and a half thousand dwellings. There were twelve hundred and fifty dwellings at Fradley and increased employment opportunities.
- The Brook Acre consortium had submitted a plan for seven and half thousand additional dwellings between Fradley and Barton Under Needwood and increased employment opportunities including distribution. This had not received approval however the pressures were there and the numbers of HG/CVs along the route was only going to increase.
- There were eleven Local Plans in process, and these included concerns regarding HG/CVs in areas.
- The concerns in the Amey report were understood. If a weight restriction was put on the A515 the problem would potentially moved onto the A38 and elsewhere.

29. 12:25 Evidence from Staffordshire Fire and Rescue and Staffordshire Police (30 minutes)

Inspector Robert Neeson referred to his regular travel along the A515 and his surprise to hear about the number of HG/CVs using the route. He explained that;

- From a Policing perspective, problem areas had to be considered.
- Issues were at cross roads as a result of driver error.
- Narrow roads were an issue and there was a need to look at this.

- If weight restrictions were put in place twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, enforcement would not be possible all of the time but there would be enforcement via operations.
- Regarding policing statistics the A515 rarely reported accidents. The main area of concern was the Mitre Junction.
- Average speed cameras had been effective from Yoxall to Draycott in the Clay.
- There were other areas such as Barton under Needham and Fradley which had similar problems.
- All schools had issues from 7:30-9am.
- Unfortunately due to budget constraints there were less Police Officers but where there was a need this need would be considered. The Police wanted to keep people safe and reassured and it was important for local Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers to be aware of concerns.
- Lichfield and East Staffordshire Police Officers would be made aware of the issues discussed.

Toby Wilson, Station Manager, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service read a statement on behalf of Tim Hyde Service Delivery Lead. Key points included that;

- Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service has “making Staffordshire the safest place to be” as its core objective. Supporting employment and prosperity was one of the cornerstones of this as deprivation was one of the greatest contributory factors to vulnerability.
- The data regarding road traffic accidents along the stretch of the A515 indicated that the use of the roads by LGV’s is not causing a disproportionate level of risk when compared to other similar roads within the County.
- One known hotspot was the Mitre Crossroads. Data suggests that it was the characteristics of the junction rather than the type of vehicle which was the biggest single factor in the incidence of road traffic collisions at that location.
- Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service is not in support of the proposed ban on LGV’s from the perspective of community safety. However, there was likely to be a link between the use of the road in support of the industry in the Fradley area and disruption of the communities along the A515, as much of the industry around Fradley is twenty four hours a day seven days a week and some is weighted so as to attract more traffic at night.
- During night time hours the A38/ A50 (the alternative to using the A515) are relatively less busy and so using these as an alternative route for LGV’s at night is less likely to be disrupted by traffic.
- Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service suggested a part time ban on LGV’s, between 7pm and 7am, would be a reasonable compromise, allowing the communities some peace and fulfilling the needs of industry and transport to have an efficient supply chain.

30. 12:55 Summary and Way Forward

The Chairman, Councillor Loades confirmed that it was obvious from the evidence received there were issues in Yoxall, Kings Bromley and Draycott in the Clay however these were case studies and there were issues across the county.

The working group needed to consider;

- Why vehicles used certain roads.
- If better routing could be recommended and enforced.
- If satellite navigation systems were having an impact.
- If roads should be reclassified.
- The damage to pavements and risks to safety.

The work of the Parish Councils was appreciated and the concerns raised were recognised. The Committee intended to use all of the information gathered to write a report and make recommendations to the Cabinet. It was acknowledged that Staffordshire needed the logistics industry, but there may be opportunities to consider delivery times. Future changes and developments also needed to be considered.

It was requested and agreed that Parish Councils would be kept informed of the progress of the inquiry.

Councillor Tagg queried the relationship between the County Council and the haulage industry and it was explained that this would be explored in more detail at the future inquiry session.

It was suggested that risk assessments should be requested from logistics firms and enforced.

It was recommended that all read the Staffordshire Freight Strategy before the next inquiry session. It was confirmed that this would be discussed at the next session and that there had been a review of the Strategy in 2014.

It was agreed that a summary of the session would be shared along with the agenda for day two.

Chairman