

**PARKING FOR HEAVY GOODS VEHICLES
(Report of the Working Group appointed by the Panel)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 12th February 2008, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) decided to establish a working group to review the issue of Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) parking throughout the District. The working group comprised Councillors K M Baker, P H Dakers, P M D Godfrey and L W McGuire. This matter had been raised initially by Councillor Dakers in response to the closure of the “Night Owl” lorry parking facility at Alconbury and his concerns relating to a reduction in overnight parking facilities for HGVs in the District.

2. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The Working Group met on 25th April 2008 and received information from the Transportation Team Leader relating to:-
- work being undertaken and guidance prepared by the County Council on parking facilities for HGVs;
 - the provision and ownership of HGV parking sites;
 - the role of local authorities in the allocation and redevelopment of sites;
 - Government policy; and
 - a 2007 study by the Department for Transport on the development of a policy for service areas and other roadside facilities on motorways and all-purpose trunk roads in England
- 2.2 Information was obtained from similar reviews carried out by other authorities, reports having been obtained from the authorities in question. Of those available, the Working Group considered the detailed studies undertaken by Suffolk and Kent County Councils into the problems of overnight lorry parking in those counties. The Kent investigation had been undertaken in conjunction with a number of District Councils, the Port of Dover, Department for Transport and Highways Agency and had involved the use of external consultants.
- 2.3 The reviews undertaken were extensive, involving
- Gathering of evidence from key stakeholders;
 - Consultation with local communities, HGV operators / drivers and key organisations; and
 - an audit of HGV parking sites within the County.

Lengthy reports were produced with a series of recommendations relating to the need to provide new HGV parking sites and to influence new parking opportunities through development applications. Other recommendations related to the need to improve signs to existing facilities, together with the quantity, quality and distribution of information provided to drivers and operators and to improve enforcement to reduce illegal HGV overnight parking. It was clear from the reports that the authorities had concluded that there was little direct action that they could take to resolve the problems that they were experiencing and that there were reliant upon trying to apply pressure and influence to encourage commercial operators to provide overnight parking facilities.

- 2.4 The Working Group's attention also was drawn to a position paper on Lorry Parking prepared by the Parking Forum in 2005, an initiative of the British Parking Association (a copy of which is attached at Appendix A). The Forum believes that there is a clear need for intervention at a national level to facilitate the provision of sufficient Truck Stops at strategic points throughout the national road network and to work with the business sector and local authorities to try to resolve the shortfall. The paper also provided information concerning the availability and demand for lorry parking, the cost of providing purpose built Truck Sops and unofficial stopping places.
- 2.5 On the basis of the extensive information and research available on the subject, the Working Group concluded that it would not be necessary to commission or undertake any further investigations.

3. DELIBERATIONS

- 3.1 The Working Group discussed the recent closure of the "Night Owl" lorry parking facility at Alconbury and the impact upon lorry drivers using the A14 and A1 trunk roads passing through the District. It is understood that the present owners of the site might be interested in its development for alternative uses. However the Group was informed that, if any planning application was to be successful, it would be necessary for the owners to demonstrate that there was a lack of demand for a lorry parking facility or that the use was redundant. Having regard to the lack of facilities elsewhere and the number of vehicles parked at the roadside, the Group acknowledged the difficulty that the owners would have in proving that demand did not exist.
- 3.2 The Working Group was apprised of the problems being experienced in South Cambridgeshire, specifically in Bar Hill and Swavesey, from drivers parking HGVs overnight on local roads which was generating substantial complaints from businesses and local residents in the area. This had prompted representations from the local Member of

Parliament. Although Members' perception was that HGVs were being parked overnight in lay-bys on the trunk roads throughout Huntingdonshire, the Group noted that there was little evidence thus far of the problems extending into communities and individual estates in close proximity to the major routes. The only exception is Alconbury where complaints have been received from the Parish Council about the parking of HGVs locally following the closure of the Truck Stop.

- 3.3 In relation to the extent of the problem countywide, the Working Group has been advised that a survey has not been undertaken and the Transportation Team Leader was asked to determine whether similar problems / issues were being encountered in the other Districts. Fenland District Council intends to undertake a study of lorry parking for their Local Development Framework, is aware of the work undertaken by Suffolk County Council and will be discussing the matter with Cambridgeshire County Council. Cambridge City Council officers are not aware of any specific issues within the city but no response has been received to date from either South Cambridgeshire or East Cambridgeshire District Councils.
- 3.4 The Group also was advised of other potential future sites which may provide some scope to expand / provide lorry parking facilities along the A14 corridor. Although this information is not yet in the public domain, the Group was advised that early discussions were taking place on the possibility presented by the A14 realignment scheme and the drawing up of Local Development Frameworks by the local planning authorities in the county.
- 3.5 The Working Group recognised that the lack of HGV parking is a national problem. Driver working time regulations and high HGV flows create a major demand for Truck Stop facilities. There are currently around 1,700 registered goods vehicle operating sites in Cambridgeshire alone and over 1.6 billion tonnes of goods are transported nationwide by road each year. Research has shown that there are insufficient facilities on the trunk road network with those routes that provide access to the east coast ports being particularly affected. Road transport remains the dominant mode for many hauliers and growth in the level of HGV movements, particularly on the A14 looks likely to continue in the future. This will create a rising demand for parking facilities throughout Cambridgeshire, including Huntingdonshire and further afield. This situation will be compounded by current proposals to rationalise lay-by arrangements along the A14 corridor. The Working Group was informed that a survey of facilities and demand within Cambridgeshire had not been undertaken in recent years but that the Department for Transport would shortly be issuing for consultation a review of lorry parking which might provide further impetus for Government action and provide an evidence base concerning the need for additional facilities.

- 3.6 The Working Group has noted some of the difficulties in establishing HGV parking sites in the absence of financial support from Government. The Department for Transport regard HGV parking as a purely commercial venture and it is left to the private sector to bring forward and operate lorry parking facilities without public funding. The construction of a well sited quality truck stop requires substantial capital investment which is only viable if a strong and continuing income stream can be achieved. Indications suggest that many operators and drivers are reluctant to pay more than a minimum for using Truck Stop facilities. As a result profit margins are limited and a high volume of business is necessary to achieve viability. Free market land values also inhibit the commercial provision of sufficient well site truck stops and the Working Group noted, for example, the recent closure of a Truck Stop in Coventry because of the high cost of ground rent.
- 3.7 The Working Group acknowledged that the District Council's principal influence on the provision of lorry parking facilities in Huntingdonshire will be through the Local Development Framework in terms of the identification of sites for HGV parking and the possible redevelopment of closed sites for alternative uses.
- 3.8 The Working Group concluded that there was little that the District Council could do in isolation to tackle a national problem. The need for Government to look at the problem urgently and work with the business sector and local authorities to resolve it was well documented. The Group therefore felt that it was unlikely that a detailed study would result in recommendations which differed from the conclusions reached by other authorities who had already undertaken similar work. A practical solution for Huntingdonshire was unlikely and the outcome would not have justified the considerable time and resource that would have to be committed to undertake a similar exercise. Overall whilst the Group recognised that the Highways Agency did not have a mandate to provide such parking or service areas, Members agreed that they should be taking a greater role in providing facilities and parking provision for the haulage industry.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Working Group recognised that there was a clear need to provide suitable parking facilities on the trunk road network to avoid the problems which arise from a lack of provision for local authorities, local communities and haulage drivers alike. However, the Group also acknowledged that market forces play a predominant role in the location and viability of purpose built truck stops which need to attract sufficient business at a rate which drivers are prepared to park if they are to operate commercially. The Working Group did not explore the

feasibility of a facility being provided or operated by the Council and acknowledged that the Council's primary influence is through the planning system and in lobbying Government.

- 4.2 The Working Group has noted that a growth in the number of HGV movements will make the situation worse over time and felt that there is an urgent need for Government to look at the problem and devise a national strategy to provide a network of truck stops that enables HGV drivers to comply with relevant regulations on driving times. Having regard to issues which were being experienced elsewhere within the County it was agreed that a collaborative approach involving all of local authorities within Cambridgeshire would be the best approach to achieve a positive result.

The Group therefore

RECOMMEND

- a) that the County Council be invited to establish a countywide forum, involving the County Council, District Councils, local Members of Parliament and HGV operators to lobby Government to investigate the problem urgently and take steps to resolve it;**
- b) that the matter be raised through the Cambridgeshire Together: Local Area Agreement Board; and**
- c) that the District Council as local planning authority seek to influence the development of suitable HGV parking opportunities in conjunction with the A14 realignment scheme.**

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Minutes of Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) on 12th February 2008

Briefing note prepared by the Transportation Team Leader

Lorry Parking: Position Paper 10 produced by the Parking Forum in 2005, an initiative of the British Parking Association

Kent Overnight Lorry Parking Study, July 2005

HGV Parking Study – Report to the Executive Committee, Suffolk County Council, February 2004

Information received from Fenland District Council and Cambridge City Council

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