

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 19 MARCH 2002 AT 10.30 A.M.

**VEHICULAR TRAFFIC AS IT AFFECTS RURAL ROADS
(U & C ROADS) AND VILLAGES**

Report of the Director of the Environment

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Executive Member:- Iris Tarry

Agenda Item No.

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1. Purpose of report

As requested by Ian Simpson, to consider whether the Committee should scrutinise vehicular traffic as it affects roads (U and C roads) and villages, in particular the problems of excessive speed, volume and use by heavy goods vehicles. Ian Simpson provided the following justification for scrutiny of this issue:

"These problems increase the danger of accidents and injury, but they are generally perceived to be primarily the cause of damage to the rural environment and residents' enjoyment of that environment. The effects include damage to roads, verges, footways and drainage, which, as well as inconveniencing residents, cost the County a large sum of money in effecting repairs and dealing with damage to vehicle claims. There is also a tendency for the roads to be gradually widened thus encouraging even more traffic. Some of the measures already in place to deal with this problem e.g. weight limits and speed limits are not enforced and perceived to be largely ignored."

2. Summary

2.1 The County has a population of over 1 million, but unlike many other counties it has no dominant settlement and residents are dispersed across the county's many villages and towns. High demand for road space is created by:

- The diverse pattern of settlements;
- Very high levels of car ownership in the county;
- Long distance commuting from, and through the county to London, and
- Access to employment areas in the county

2.2 Consequently many "C" and "U" class roads can suffer rat- running traffic over-spilling from the motorways and main roads.

2.3 67% of villages have no grocery store or supermarket; 63% have no newsagent and 66% have no Post Office. For many people who live in the rural parts of the county the car is the only viable means of transport currently available.

2.4 The quieter, rural roads in conjunction with the Rights of Way network form a valuable network for walkers, cyclists and equestrians. This provides health, leisure and transport benefits.

3. Conclusion

The Committee is invited to consider whether or not to scrutinise this issue. If so, it should consider how to undertake the scrutiny and whether to make any recommendations to the Council, Cabinet or Chief Officers.

4. Background - Roads & Traffic Data

Road Lengths (km)

Rural U & C Roads	Urban U & C Roads	All County Roads
1,171	2,737	4,858

Annual Average Daily Traffic Flows (16 Hours AADT)

Rural C Roads	Urban C Roads
6,700	10,400

Traffic Growth (NRTF)

	Rural		Urban	
	Minor Roads	All Roads	Minor Roads	All Roads
1996*	100	100	100	100
2001	107	110	110	108
2011	122	130	132	125
2021	136	150	153	141

*Base Year @ 100%

Injury Accidents (Year 2000)

Rural U & C Roads	Urban U & C Roads	All County Roads
275	1402	4959

Injury Accidents per km

Rural U & C Roads	Urban U & C Roads	All County Roads
0.23	0.51	1.02

5. Rural Transport Policy

5.1 The Rural Transport section in the Local Transport Plan (LTP) sets out the County's policy for meeting the transport needs of rural areas. Incorporated within the strategy are a number of projects being undertaken by the County Council and other partner organisations, many of which are pilot projects to determine a level of need and possible solutions.

Highway based pilot projects include:

- Quiet Lanes
- Rural Safer Routes
- Village Speed Management
- Village Regeneration

5.2 Since the adoption of the LTP in July 2000, many of the pilot projects have reached fruition, and there is now a much clearer view of successful approaches and solutions. There is also a greater clarification of how partner organisations can work together and in particular how funding can be used to achieve the best results.

5.3 After the publication of the LTP, the Government published the Rural White Paper

‘Our Countryside: the future, a fair deal for rural England’ (November 2000). Under the theme of "A Living Countryside" the White Paper recognises the need for an integrated transport approach to address the issues of rural transport. Within this approach the Government now requires that the LTP, through the Annual Progress Report identifies how the White Paper's transport policies are being delivered and to show progress against rural targets and performance indicators.

5.4 Maintenance activity on the rural road network is carried out in such a manner as to preserve, wherever possible, the original characteristics of the route.

6. Review of Rural Transport Strategy

6.1 Against this local and national background the County Council’s Transport Panel has resolved to review and revise the Rural Transport Strategy, including prioritising areas for action. This review will bring together the results from all of the pilot projects and seek to strengthen the links with partner organisations. A joint officer and member steering group will oversee the exercise, which will include the convening of a stakeholder conference in summer 2002. The review will also support the Hertfordshire Rural Forum, from which the 5 County member representatives have been invited to sit on the joint steering group. Full public consultation will be carried out in conjunction with the LTP Process.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 The primary source of funding for highway improvements within rural areas is the Rural Programme of the LTP. The indicative allocation for the programme is as follows:

02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06
£550,000	£915,000	£900,000	£900,000

In addition investment in improvements may also be drawn from the following programmes:

- Safety Engineering
- Area Plans
- Traffic & Environmental

7.2 The investment in carriageway maintenance is determined by need, based on condition surveys of the network across the County. No differentiation is made between rural and urban roads in the determination of maintenance programmes.

7.3 A ranking system is used to prioritise the worst accident sites around the county to make best use of limited funds. Again, in developing programmes there is no discrimination between rural and urban roads.

Background papers used by the author when compiling this report

None