



Report of the Director of City Services and the Director of Development

Executive Board

Date: 10th May 2006

Subject: Deputation to Council by the Leeds Road Residents' Action Group

Electoral wards affected:

Rothwell

Specific implications for:

Ethnic minorities

Women

Disabled people

Narrowing the gap

Eligible for call In

Not eligible for call in
(details contained in the report)

Executive Summary

1. Following a deputation to Council from the Leeds Road Residents' Action Group, the Council was requested to:-
 - Support the call for a HGV ban.
 - Support the call for a study to be undertaken on the probable impact on local roads and to the area in general from the construction of the East Leeds Link road, and the inner Ring Road Link to the M62.
 - Support the concerns that throughout the City, double standards prevail where the decision to locate speed cameras is made.
 - Supports the calls for more positive road safety measures to be introduced to ensure better road safety protection for children attending Royds School.

2. This report considers the detailed submission made to Council and responds to them.

1.0 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to respond to the issues raised in the deputation to Council on 5th April 2006 by the Leeds Road Residents' Action Group.

2.0 Background information

- 2.1 Residents have previously expressed concern about the volume of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV's) and the speed of traffic on the A639, Leeds Road. Meetings have been held, chaired by Jean Dent, Director of Development, between the organizers of the Action Group and officers of the Development Department and City Services Department.

3.0 Main issues

- 3.1 The main issues raised are the use of the A639 and A642 by heavy goods vehicles (HGV) and the speed of traffic on the road. The deputation to Council highlighted several points within these two issues which will be addressed by providing the wording of the deputation followed by the officer response.
- 3.2 *"Council monitoring shows that most vehicles passing through the ward are traveling at speeds well in excess of the speed limits. Recent traffic monitoring showed that more than 80% of vehicles traveling along Leeds Road were traveling in excess of the 40mph speed limit, 5026 vehicles were traveling in excess of 60mph, with 677 of those traveling at more than 70mph – this is a residential area!"*
- 3.3 *"Speed cameras would be an obvious solution but Council officers, who have accepted that there is a serious speeding problem, say that there is nothing that the Council can do, other than to bring the matter to the attention of the police. There seems to be a major imbalance between the number of speed cameras in the north of the city and the number in the south."*
- 3.4 The measurement of traffic speeds were undertaken on the dual –carriageway section of the A639 for a period of 7 days between 7th and 13th June 2005. The total 24 hour 2-way traffic flow during that 7 day period was 89,002 vehicles, a daily average of 12715. Of these 45,063 were traveling southbound and 43,939 were traveling northbound. There is no disagreement with the quoted speed figures.
- 3.5 As a designated 'A' classified road these are highways, which it is agreed by the Secretary of State and the local highway authority, to be of importance to the movement of traffic. Part of the A642 is an advisory lorry route for HGV's which are prohibited from an adjoining section of the A642. Because of the nature of the road, residential areas have developed along side them and accessed via other roads. There is very limited direct residential access onto the dual – carriageway of Leeds Road.
- 3.6 The police are the only agency which can enforce speed limits. It is therefore essential that when a speeding problem is identified the initial action is that the police are requested to provide enforcement. This has been done.
- 3.7 Speed cameras are introduced on behalf of Leeds City Council by the West Yorkshire Safety Camera Partnership. The rules for the safety camera netting off scheme have been developed to have the most positive road safety benefits. Partnerships should use the guideline of four accidents resulting in people being killed or seriously injured over the previous three years at sites they propose to enforce using cameras. This does not preclude cameras being placed at sites that

do not meet the guidelines if they contribute to the overall strategy aimed at reducing road accident casualties. Since those forming the partnership are able to use some of the fine revenue to cover their costs involved in camera operation, it is vital camera deployment meets the primary purpose to reduce collisions, deaths and injuries. Cameras provided solely where there is a large number of vehicles exceeding the speed limit would raise allegations of 'stealth tax on motorists' or 'revenue generation' and would support the arguments raised by those opposed to safety cameras. There may be an imbalance between cameras locations north and south of the city, the cameras are provided on the basis outlined above following a study of accidents.

- 3.8 Consideration has been given to the introduction of physical traffic calming but it is considered that on a dual-carriageway, 'A' class road subject to a 40mph speed limit this would be inappropriate, indeed vertical deflection measures are expressly prohibited on roads with a speed limit above 30mph. The suggestion of Vehicle Activated signs (VAS) has also been considered. VAS are signs which are activated only by vehicles exceeding a pre-determined speed and remind the driver to slow down or beware of an approaching hazard. They are increasingly requested across the City as a 'soft' form of traffic calming. Their effectiveness, whilst high initially, reduces with time from feedback received at locations where they are currently in operation. This location would meet the current criteria for the provision of a VAS.
- 3.9 Being a dual carriageway, with properties set back from the roadside, creates a visually open aspect which does not give the impression to the motorist that the speed limit is 40mph. Traffic speeds could be constrained by changing the nature of the road from a dual carriageway to a single carriageway, i.e. removing completely one half of the road. This would be very expensive and would have an effect on the capacity of the road also, potentially inducing delays.
- 3.10 *"Government guidance in connection with vehicle movements to and from industrial developments has been overlooked and there are significant numbers of heavy goods vehicles using the Leeds and Wakefield road link between Junction 44 of the M1 in Stourton and Junction 30 of the M62, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, when there is a direct motorway access between these two junctions, and next to nothing in terms of journey time."*
- 3.11 The general guidance recommends that where possible the developments which generate large numbers of freight movements should be located away from congested central areas and residential areas and ensure adequate access to trunk roads. In this instance, the main developments are located adjacent to the M1 at junction 44 and are on an A class road which is maintained for all-purpose traffic use
- 3.12 Notwithstanding the above comments, however, the Council has contacted the two major companies requesting that they undertake a review of deliveries to and from their site with a view to using the Motorway network wherever possible. These consultations are still ongoing.
- 3.13 Concern has previously been raised by this group with regard to diverted traffic on the A639 caused by the construction of the East Leeds Link Road. At present there are in the order of 1000 vehicles in the peak period "rat running" along Pontefract Lane, which is really a country lane. This road will be required to be closed whilst the new road is constructed. It is proposed not to sign specific diversion routes as alternatives to the city centre, especially the A639, during construction, as Pontefract Lane is not a designated route.

- 3.14 *“Requests made to the Council for a HGV ban along this residential route, for either a full ban or a night time ban have been discounted out of hand by officers of the council. This flow of HGV traffic particularly through the night is having a detrimental effect upon the quality of life for people living along the route and a loss of amenity.”*
- 3.15 A manual traffic survey undertaken adjacent to Second Avenue on behalf of the Department for Transport (DfT) as part of an annual survey programme showed that in September 2005, for the period 7am to 7pm, there were 11,850 total vehicles of which 500 were HGV's. Such one day surveys can only be a 'snapshot' of the traffic in an area which can fluctuate depending upon the time of year and traffic conditions on surrounding roads. A further survey was carried out for a full week in September 2005 using an automatic traffic counter approximately 150metres north of Parkways. The average weekday traffic flows for the period 7am to 7pm, in both directions were, 11,000 total vehicles of which 400 were HGV's. The results from both surveys are broadly in line, indicating approximately 11,500 vehicles recorded on a weekday between 7 am and 7pm of which just over 4% were HGV's.
- 3.16 *“There is already an HGV ban along a long stretch of the A642 and other ‘A’ classified roads in the Leeds area.”*
- 3.17 The A642 ban was introduced in the early 1990's to reduce the volume of HGV's on this single carriageway road with closely frontaged properties and several river bridges until completion of the M1 link. The alternative route was the M62 and A1. The Council nearly had to go to a Public Enquiry because of objections from Castleford on the displacement of HGV's onto their roads. This was resolved by a HGV ban around Castleford. With the M1 link now in place consideration could be given to removing the ban which has many exemptions.
- 3.18 *“With regard to a possible night time ban we are told by council officers that the Police do not have the resources to police such a ban but this is in contrast to a proposed HGV ban in the Cross Green area of Leeds where the Police themselves have confirmed that the ban is going to be self policing.”*
- 3.19 The HGV restriction on Cross Green Lane is to be experimental and unlikely to be enforced by the police. Traffic calming had been introduced to deter HGV's but this has been removed due to the excessive noise as HGV's traveled over the traffic calming features. The restriction is experimental because the building of the East Leeds Link should completely remove the HGV traffic, in which case the restriction would be lifted.
- 3.20 *“We are concerned about the road safety issues along Wakefield Road. Royds School has 1400 children and those who live in Oulton and Woodlesford have to cross the road to the school. These are ‘A’ class roads and there isn't a pedestrian controlled crossing point anywhere in sight. The bus stop where children get off the bus is also at the opposite side of the road. Following our concerns in 2001, a detailed survey was carried out and highways officers confirmed in February 2002 that a controlled crossing was to be installed along the dual carriageway, at the junction with Aberford Road. Nothing ever happened.”*
- 3.21 The required crossing surveys were undertaken and the results submitted to the annual Pedestrian Crossing Review, at which all requests for crossings are considered from across the City. The criteria for crossings were not met. A location opposite the Royds School was, however, investigated further but there were concerns that placing a crossing at the place where pupils cross could create accidents because the crossing would not be fully visible to motorists due to the

vertical and horizontal alignment of the road. Consideration was given to moving the bus stop lay-by away from the school to enable a crossing to be better located but this would require the acquisition of land to create a lay-by. The recent review reported to the Joint Highways Board has requested further investigation to determine whether providing a signalised junction with pedestrian facilities is feasible.

3.22 *“Unless the existing road problems are addressed before the opening up of the East Leeds Link Road then the effect upon ‘their quality of life’ will be horrendous, once the increased traffic volumes hit. Traffic counts have shown that there are already in excess of 230,000 vehicles passing through the area every week, and yet there are just 9000 houses in Rothwell.”*

3.23 The figure of 230,000 vehicles passing through the area every week has, it is believed, been derived from adding several traffic surveys together. The levels of traffic on not only the roads of the city, but of the country, are considered by many to be too high, but with increasing car ownership will continue to increase. In the quoted figure will be all types of traffic, the large majority being private cars and vans of residents, commuters, shoppers, ‘the school-run’ and visitors; local and long distance delivery vehicles; public utility vehicles and bus services. One vehicle could be counted on numerous occasions.

4.0 Implications for council policy and governance

4.1 The problem of speeding traffic is a social problem of national proportions. The council receives considerable numbers of requests to reduce speed limits at a time when the majority of motorists admit to exceeding the set limits. The Secretary of State for Transport has indicated that all Highway Authorities must review the speed limits on all class ‘A’ and ‘B’ roads in the coming years. Guidance is currently awaited on the criteria to be applied to this review.

4.2 Changes in speed limits and restrictions on any class of road user require a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). There is a prescribed process for introducing a TRO which involves extensive consultation, advertising and an opportunity for rightful road users to object to a proposal. Such objections have to be resolved before a TRO can be introduced.

4.3 Any restrictions or ban on HGV’s has to be considered carefully. Within any such restriction there has to be an exemption for access to properties on the road or those served from it. How it will be enforced has to be considered. Again, the police are the only agency with powers to enforce such a restriction. The Council has a duty to ‘secure the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority’s road network’ and this requires that ‘A’ class roads are increasingly maintained for all-purpose traffic use. If a restriction is agreed for a particular road, will this lead to subsequent requests from roads where the need may be greater and, if so, how these would be refused. Many other ‘A’ class roads in Leeds have problems with HGV’s but to consider restrictions or bans will divert this type of traffic onto other roads which may be less suitable and may limit the future development of the City. Other roads in Leeds with the same level of HGV’s as Leeds Road include:-

A653 Dewsbury Road,
A61 Harrogate Road,
A660 Woodhouse Lane
A6038, Bradford Road, Guiseley
A65, New Road Side,
A659 Boroughgate, Otley.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 The balance between the safety and environmental issues of traffic exceeding speed limits and the volume of HGV's on the roads of Leeds with the need for 'A' class roads to carry multi-purpose vehicles to service the businesses and residents of the City is complex and needs to be considered in detail. The issues of HGV traffic in Otley have been well documented to the Executive Board and other communities could raise similarly valid arguments.
- 5.2 Officers will continue to monitor the levels of HGV and speeding traffic, especially with the construction of the East Leeds Link. Where measures may be appropriate to reduce the level of speeding these will be considered within the annual programme of traffic engineering work subject to the prioritization of available resources.
- 5.3 The ability of the police to provide enforcement on moving traffic issues is increasingly questioned by the public, who have to seek assistance from the Council which, while it can partly address the concerns by engineering measures, cannot take enforcement action.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Executive Board is requested to note the concerns of the Leeds Road Residents' Action Group and note the response of the officers of the Development and City Services Department.