

## **Notes from Public Meeting held on 12.1.17, to present the results of the 2016 HGV Survey, in the Roden Suite, Edinburgh House, New Street, Wem.**

75+ members of the public present

### **Shropshire Council representatives**

Victoria Merrill - Transport Planning Commissioner.

David Gradwell - Area Traffic Engineer – North.

Victoria Doran - Highways Manager

Steven Brown - Highways, Transport & Environmental Commissioning Manager

Councillor S. Jones - Shropshire Council Portfolio Holder for Highways

### **Welcome from the Chairmen**

Cllr Dodd Mayor of Wem and Cllr Tim Wilton-Morgan representative of Wem Rural Parish Council welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined how the meeting would be run, with a presentation by Shropshire Council followed by a question and answer session.

### **Presentation on results of the HGV survey in Wem.**

David Gradwell started the presentation by explaining that HGV's accessing the town of Wem had been a problem for a number years. He outlined the previous work that had been carried out by Shropshire Council in an attempt to alleviate the problem which included

- Priority system for traffic adjacent to the Church on Mill Street;
- Box junction at Mill Street / High Street; and
- Widened junction at Mill Street / High Street by repositioning the Church wall.

Victoria Doran explained the survey was commissioned following requests from Wem Economic Forum to look into the issue in more detail. The objectives of the survey were as follows

- To understand the nature of HGV movements through Wem, in particular on Mill Street, differentiating local access and through trips.
- To enable Shropshire Council to determine appropriate interventions, if any, based upon robust background data

Victoria Merrill explained that the survey took place between Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> June to Friday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016, 07:00 -19:00 and the data collected was from the use of

- Video cameras to record two way traffic movements.
- Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) software to capture registration details of 7.5T+ vehicles, direction of travel and time.

All data was collected in line with guidelines issued by Department of Transport and the results reflect a fair representation of the current situation.

The data collected from the survey enabled officers to identify that

- 9% (25) of total HGV flow (278) on Mill Street are through trips.

- 15% (33) of total HGV flow (226) on High Street are through trips.
- The majority of HGVs on Mill Street (91%) and High Street (85%) are local access trips to Wem or its hinterland.
- HGVs accounted for 67% of recorded HGVs. 25% were buses and coaches and the remaining 8% were agricultural vehicles.

Steven Brown concluded his presentation by outlining the options for future works that Shropshire Council would like Wem Town Council and Wem Rural Parish Council to consider in relation to this issue

- A review of advisory HGV route signage in the Town.
- To consider potential loading restrictions in the town centre to minimise the impact of HGV's.
- To consider pursuing an Environmental Weight restriction on Mill Street.

**Key factors to consider if an Environmental Weight restriction on Mill Street was to be pursued:**

- The restriction would not apply to buses, agricultural vehicles or vehicles with an access requirement within the zone;
- The restriction would only apply to goods vehicles with a plated maximum gross weight of over 7.5T, regardless of if vehicles are fully laden or not.
- Vehicles will not be permitted to drive through the zone to access premises on the other side. Therefore if an Environmental Weight Restriction was introduced on Mill Street, HGVs from south of Wem would not be able to use Mill Street to access shops on High Street. They would need an alternative route.

There must also be availability of suitable alternative routes given the local nature of HGV trips.

Alternative routes should:

- Be as good as or better than existing routes;
- Not transfer HGVs to other environmentally sensitive locations, or
- Not introduce a major increase in distance for HGV operators.

Consultation would also need to take place with Neighbouring affected Parishes, Freight Transport Association or Road Haulage Association.

An Environmental weight restriction on Mill Street could;

- Impact the number of HGVs using Mill Street;
- Displace HGVs on to other sensitive routes in the town;
- Negatively impact local business and deliveries, and
- Generate a need for enforcement reliant on police resource.

## Questions

Cllr Wilton- Morgan from Wem Rural Parish chaired the question and answer session on the results.

**Peter Marsh, Wem Rural Parish Council (WRPC)** Questioned whether there was any differential made over the size of the vehicles in the survey and he stated that he felt that local businesses were being unfairly maligned in this survey. Shropshire Council responded that no judgements were being made or presented to the public. However the survey reflected that the majority of trips were associated with local access which would include local businesses.

A resident of High Street raised concerns over the air quality in the High Street and reported that she felt pollution levels caused by traffic were unacceptable and could cause damage to health. Steven

Brown responded that Shropshire Council has a legal obligation to monitor air quality and this information would be fed back to the Public Protection Team to action.

**Liz Vernon (WRPC)** raised concerns over the impact that HGV traffic diverted away from Mill Street and High Street would have on the rural road network around the town. Steven Brown agreed that this could be a problem and the views of neighbouring parishes must be taken into account on this issue. He stated that Shropshire Council is willing to put in place the aforementioned options but if these are supported by the Town and Parish Councils they must understand the implications of these options on the rural areas.

A resident of the High Street raised the issue caused by lorries passing each other along the High Street and mounting the kerb. She reported that the problem was particularly bad where she lived as there was no kerb to prevent lorries mounting the pavement. Victoria Doran responded that she would investigate this particular issue to see whether a raised kerb would make any difference in this location. However she stated that it would be very difficult to place physical barriers along the length of the High Street due to the physical width of the pavement and the cost implications.

A resident of High Street asked whether it would be possible to prioritise the direction of traffic by Maund's Corner – Dave Gradwell responded that this was not possible due to visibility issues. It was also explained that any weight restrictions on Mill Street would have a negative impact on Maund's Corner.

**Mandy Meakin, Wem Town Council (WTC)** Stated that Wem needs HGV's to access the town in order for the businesses to be served and that a weight restriction would not work. She asked whether it would be possible to put a time restriction on HGV's using Mill Street – David Gradwell responded that any HGV time restrictions would have to be in conjunction with a weight restriction.

A member of the audience commented that HGV vehicles had low emissions and most HGV's were cleaner than white vans so they could not be blamed for pollution on the High Street.

A Wem resident asked for an update on the plans to build a link road along the East side of the railway as this could alleviate the problem considerably. In addition to this he asked whether a full traffic survey could be carried out in the Town. Simon Jones responded that due to funding limitations there was not funding available to support a full traffic survey. With regard to the link road he stated that whilst this had been looked at in the past this option was not currently being pursued and the only circumstances that that may result in this would be if the level crossing was to close which would force the building of a link road.

**Pauline Dee, (WTC)** asked whether a length restriction on HGV's could be implemented. David Gradwell responded that a length restriction will only send long vehicles on more unsuitable roads

**Sue Griffiths** a resident of Mill Street highlighted the photographs of HGV's damaging the town and claimed that the vehicles that are knocking the town apart are not local. She stated that residents needed assurance from Shropshire Council of their safety. Steven Brown responded that Shropshire Council will only implement any of the options presented this evening if they had the backing of the Town and Rural Parish Councils.

**Mr Brown from NCB motors** – thanked Shropshire Council for the survey and said it was excellent. He stated that his coaches have to access the High Street in order to bring students to school and that they do all they can to avoid the High Street and spread the impact. He stated that his preferred options would be;

- No loading unloading on the High Street between 7.30 – 9.30 and 3-5pm

- Parking bays outside the old Nat West Bank should be removed.

A resident from Quina Brook outlined the impact that a weight restriction would have on Quina Brook residents as all northbound traffic going out of Wem would be routed through Quina Brook which would have a real negative impact on residents.

**Fiona Ford, (WRPC)** – Reported that this was not a new issue. She declared that as Wem is a market town it has always had HGV's accessing the town to supply local businesses including Isherwoods and the Brewery when they were open. She stated that the community needs to be proud of Wem and what we have here.

A number of the audience raised concerns about the safety of pedestrians including children using the pavements especially along Mill Street when lorries frequently mount the pavements in order to pass each other.

A resident asked whether signs stating local traffic and deliveries only could be put up at the entrance of the town. David Gradwell responded that whilst this was possible the signs would be advisory only not enforceable.

**Mr Griffiths** owner of Oaklands Egg Farm in Wem Rural Parish reported that that movements of his tractors carrying waste from his farm through the town would be reduced greatly in future months as soon as planning for the companies' new anaerobic digester in Shawbury had been completed.

**Len Staines, (WRPC)** stated that the views of the rural parishes must be taken on board before any decisions can be made.

**John Murray, (WTC)** endorsed the suggestion to remove parking in layby by the old Nat West bank and stated that something needs to be done to alleviate the problems on Maund's corner. He also conveyed his thanks to the coach operators for their attention and thanks to Shropshire Council for carrying out the survey.

**Edward Towers, (WTC)** Questioned why the bypass is not being progressed as it is part of the solution which could see a longer term sustainable solution.

**Mr Glover, (WRPC)** asked whether Shropshire Council had considered a fixed time traffic flow system through the town so large vehicles could access the Town. Steven Brown responded that a traffic light system similar to this had recently been introduced at Much Wenlock and something similar could be a solution for the town. However it should be noted that Shropshire Council are still reviewing the success of the scheme in Much Wenlock and the parameters of this scheme are different to Wem in that it relates to one street section.

## **Conclusion**

Cllr Dodd concluded the evening by stating that the Town Council's priorities were the

- Safety of residents
- Preservation of buildings
- Economy of the town and surrounding area

She reported that the options presented this evening would be considered at the next Wem Town Council meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2017 and at the Wem Rural Parish Council meeting to be held on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> February.

She requested that Shropshire Council officers listen to the views of the Town and Parish Councils and take appropriate action based on those views.