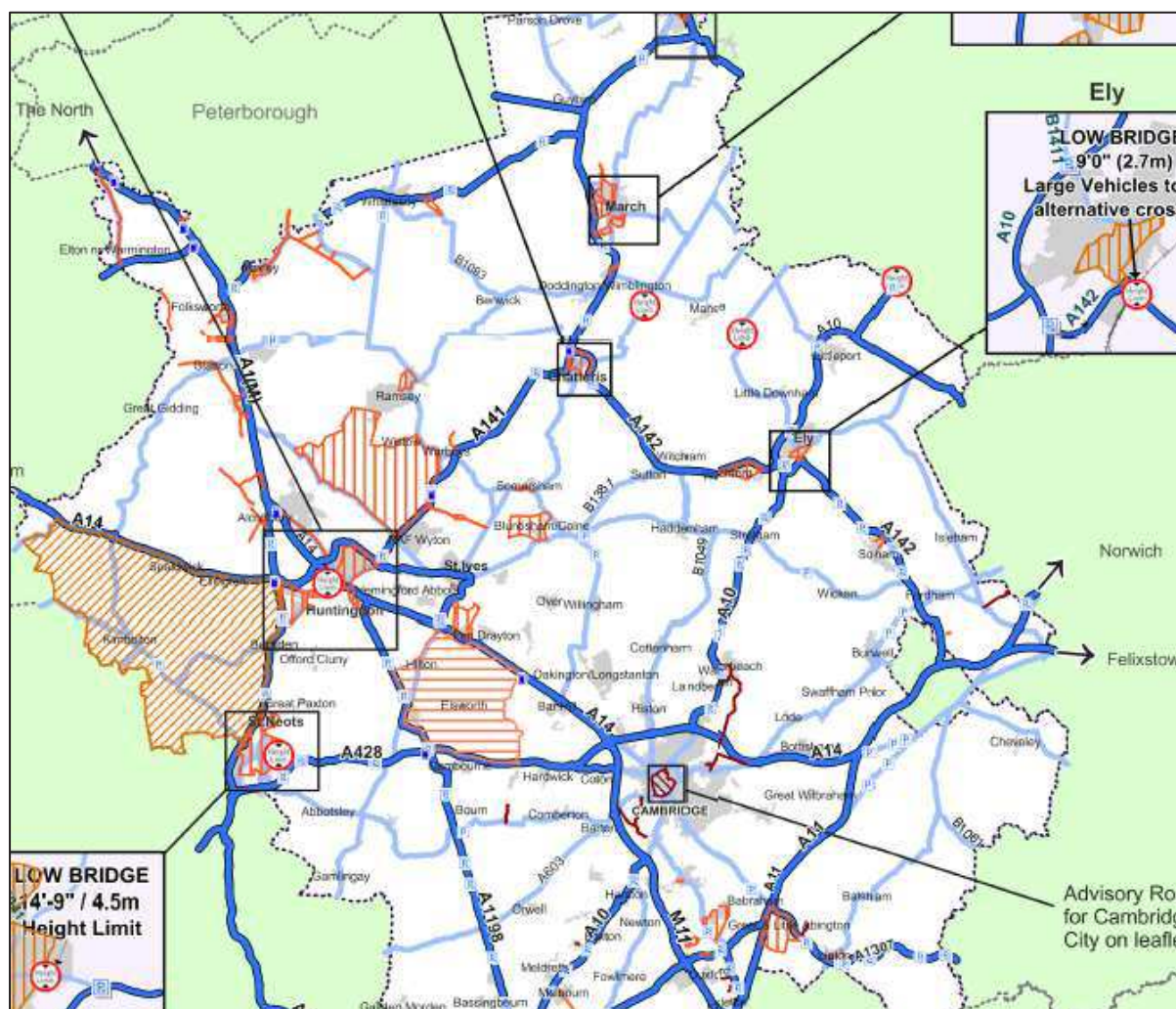


HCV traffic in the 'diamond'

I have asked to address you today about the issue of HCV traffic through villages in what is referred to in the East Cambridgeshire Transportation Strategy as the 'diamond area'.

This 'diamond area', incorrectly referred to on page 44 of the document as 'the Sutton-Earith-Aldreth-Wilburton diamond area' (an error I would request be corrected), is in fact the diamond expressed in the county's Strategic Freight Route Map, and is formed by the A14, A141, and A142 and bisected by the A10.



HCVs and the Ely bypass

The Strategy starts from the premise that the problem it is seeking to solve is the potential impact of the construction of the Ely Southern bypass on HCV movements in the 'diamond' villages. However, the Joint Parishes HCV Group has been meeting for some eight years to seek to address the intolerable *current* level of HCV traffic through its member villages, which include Sutton, Haddenham, Earith, Bluntisham, Hilton, Wilburton and Cottenham.

No assessment was done of the potential impact of the Ely Southern bypass on these villages, despite requests by and promises to affected parishes. The only formal Traffic Impact Assessment undertaken for the Ely Southern bypass was for the environs of Ely. Internal correspondence between officers, sent to a resident by mistake, indicated their clear intention not to carry out any further formal assessment at the time. There is therefore no evidence to support the opinion that the construction of the Ely Southern bypass will reduce HCV traffic in villages in the 'diamond'.

Joint Parishes HCV Group

This Group has been working towards the introduction of one or more Traffic Regulation Orders, the effect of which would be to give legal force to the current advisory Strategic Freight Route Map.

TRO preparations have progressed well beyond simply 'being investigated'. A dossier of evidence has been prepared, which demonstrates potential annual public health benefits running into millions of pounds, and road maintenance savings of at least £250K a year. Costs of signage and other implementation issues are being gathered and the Group will be discussing these further with the police, the County Council's Highways Department and the Highways Agency. Progress on this TRO for an 'except for loading' weight limit, protecting many more villages than Sutton, Earith, Aldreth and Wilburton, should be reflected in the proposed Strategy document.

Since the HCV Group's dossier was first prepared, a study by Kings College London for the London Mayor's office has shown that NO_x emissions result in public health costs similar to those recognised for particulates (*Understanding the Health Impacts of Air Pollution in London*, July 2015). The demonstrable benefits of implementing the 'diamond' TRO can therefore be expected to be increased and the dossier is being updated accordingly.

NO_x and particulates

Air quality is not an urban issue only. Measurements taken by the Joint Parishes HCV Group in compiling its dossier indicated NO_x levels in Haddenham similar to those in suburban Bedford. Snapshot measurements in villages in the 'diamond' showed particulate levels in Wilburton High Street approximately double the limit laid down in the UK Air Standards Regulations 2010. It is recognised by the WHO and the EU that there is no medically safe limit for particles smaller than 2.5 microns (PM2.5).

No measurement whatsoever of particulates is carried out in East Cambridgeshire, so there are no data to inform a view about air quality in these villages, other than those collected by the Joint Parishes HCV Group.

(In April 2015, ClientEarth won a Supreme Court ruling against the UK government which ordered ministers to come up with a plan to bring air pollution down within legal limits as soon as possible. Those plans were so poor that ClientEarth took the government back to the High Court in a Judicial Review which it won in November 2016. In 2014 the EU Commission launched legal proceedings against the UK Government for failing to carry out identified actions to reduce NO_x as obliged by the UK Air Standards Regulations 2010. The EU Commission won this case in November 2014. Following the ClientEarth case which demonstrated failure to comply with the 2014 ruling, the way is now open for the European Commission to take infringement action against UKG without waiting for any ruling by the European Court of Justice).

Noise

Noise measurements in villages in the 'diamond' have shown that HCV traffic noise exceeds the levels at which housing development would not have been permitted under the now withdrawn Government planning guidance PPG24. Proposals to reduce the noise pollution resulting from traffic through villages are not laid out in the Strategy, and should be.

Conclusion

It is well recognised that the public health costs of noise and pollution are very high indeed. The figures are available in summaries of evidence published by DEFRA. The cost of maintenance on roads carrying heavy volumes of HCV traffic for which they are not intended is also high. Both could be mitigated by the implementation of one or more TROs in the 'diamond' villages.

Cllr Lorna Dupré (Sutton)
December 2016