

## A1123 and A1421 reclassification to 'B' road status

To: Highways and Transport Committee

Meeting Date: 27 July 2021

From: Steve Cox, Executive Director Place and Economy

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: Yes

Forward Plan ref: 2021/042

### Outcome:

The outcome is that the proposed motion to re classify the A1123 and A1421 roads from A road to a B road is not progressed at this time but kept under review.

Recommendation: The committee is recommended to:

- a) Note the requirement for a decision on this matter to be taken by Committee, for the reasons set out in the report
- b) on the balance of the technical analysis contained in this report not to progress the proposal to declassify the A1123 and A1421 from A road to B road status at this time but to carry out further consultation, analysis and discussion with communities.
- c) request officers investigate potential options for traffic calming and speed reduction measures on these roads and possible sources of funding.

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# 1. Background

- 1.1 Former County Councillor Bill Hunt presented a motion to Full Council on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020 to instruct the Executive Director for Place and Economy to pursue the reclassification of the A1123 and A1421 from “A” to “B”. This motion was carried. Following this decision officers carried out technical analysis and consultation. A map showing the extent of the roads potentially affected is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 Following the motion to Full Council, officers commenced a technical assessment of the likely implications of the reclassifications. This technical assessment enabled the Executive Director Place and Economy to form a view on whether the decision to reclassify these roads would fall within his delegated powers. The financial implications of the proposed reclassifications, as outlined in paragraphs 2.10 to 2.14 of this report, put this decision beyond the Executive Director’s delegated powers. Given that the overall financial implications of these proposals would exceed £500,000 cumulatively over 2 financial years this is a Key Decision for this committee.
- 1.2 The responsibility for the classification of roads was passed down to Local Highway Authorities from the Department for Transport (DfT) in 2012. The relevant legislation covering classification of roads can be found in section 12(3) of the Highways Act 1980.
- 1.3 The County Council has a policy on road classifications, and this is contained in Appendix L of the Highways Operational Standards (HOS). This states that, excluding motorways, all UK roads fall into one of four classifications:
- A Roads – major roads providing large scale transport links within and between urban areas.
  - B Roads – roads intended to connect lesser areas and connect A roads to smaller roads on the network.
  - Classified Unnumbered – smaller roads intended to connect unclassified roads (see below) with A and B roads, often linking a housing estate or village to the rest of the network. Although called “classified unnumbered” in statute, most local authorities refer to these as “C Roads” and have developed their own numbering systems.
  - Unclassified – The remainder of the highway network, typically local roads carrying local traffic such as residential estate roads or minor rural roads serving small settlements or individual farms.
- 1.4 These four classes of road form a hierarchy. Large volumes of traffic and traffic travelling longer distances should typically be using roads with a higher classification, whilst smaller volumes of more local traffic should be using roads with a lower classification. There is, however, no fixed relationship between the different road classifications and traffic flows carried. In general, the higher classes of road will carry more traffic than the lower, but the situation will vary depending on the context. Hence, the classification of a road reflects its strategic importance in the local network, rather than the number of vehicles it carries or its width.

- 1.5 Although classification now rests with Local Highway Authorities, the Secretary of State retains ultimate legal responsibility for road classification and the Primary Road Network and retains the right to intervene if necessary. The A1123 and A1421 do not form part of the Primary Route Network.
- 1.6 In its guidance, the DfT has made it clear that classifications must be set in a way that reflects the road network in their local area. Any standards therefore must be relative:
- An 'A' road will generally be among the widest, most direct roads in an area, and will be of the greatest significance to through traffic.
  - A 'B' road will still be of significance to traffic (including through traffic), but less so than an A road.
  - A 'Classified' Un-numbered road will be of lower significance and be of primarily local importance but will perform a more important function than an unclassified road.
  - An 'Unclassified' road will generally have very low significance to traffic and be of only very local importance.
- 1.7 The DfT recognises that the pressures of connectivity will, in places, mean that A and B roads will necessarily go through populated areas or sites with environmental issues. In some cases, it may be necessary to select one road from several broadly similar roads for a particular classification, in order to ensure that the overall network retains coherence.
- 1.8 Road classification needs to be consistent from one authority to another and should not change classification at the administrative boundary without a clear reason. When reclassifying a road across a local authority boundary, any change will need to be agreed by both authorities.
- 1.9 Changes to road classification do not require public consultation or advertisement, but this may be undertaken at the discretion of the Local Highway Authority.
- 1.10 The need for new or revised road classifications arises in various ways but are most commonly due to:
- the construction of new road schemes (e.g. bypasses)
  - a change of role due to new traffic management systems
  - very occasionally, existing historic inconsistencies that need addressing
- 1.11 In deciding the appropriate classification to be applied to a road the starting point will be the general descriptions of each level of classification as provided in the DfT's Guidance and set out above. More specifically, the following points will be considered:
- the strategic role the road plays in moving people and goods from one location to another. This will vary in context, particular between rural and urban areas.
  - the general level of traffic and proportion of goods vehicles that the road is carrying (or expected to carry in the case of new roads).
  - any wider traffic management routeing strategies in the vicinity.
  - the standard and classification of other nearby roads.

## 2. Main Issues

### Consultation

2.1 The following people and potentially affected bodies were consulted regarding the proposed reclassifications. It should be noted that the consultation took place prior to the completion of the technical analysis and financial assessment and therefore the consultees were not given details of the analysis or potential financial implications for the council as part of the consultation.

- All affected local county councillors
- Parish Councils on the affected routes
- Relevant District Councillors
- Department for Transport
- Highways England
- Suffolk County Council
- Peterborough City Council
- East Cambs District Council
- Hunts District Council
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
- Schools potentially affected
- Road Haulage Association
- Cambs Police
- Joint Parishes HCV Group
- St Ives Civic Society

2.2 DfT confirmed that the department has no objections to the proposal, as did Highways England, Suffolk County Council and the Combined Authority. These are taken as neutral responses.

2.3 Peterborough City Council (PCC) responded to say that on the principle of renumbering the A1123 and A1421 they would initially object, as this might directly impact on the funding provided by the Department for Transport (DfT) for maintaining the highway in Peterborough. For this objection to be withdrawn, PCC would need assurances that Peterborough's allocation from the DfT would be unaffected.

2.4 The initial response from Cambridgeshire Police was neutral, stating that no objection was anticipated. The Police did raise the issue that, should the reclassification go ahead, any subsequent changes such as weight or speed limits might not be supported without an actual change in the road environment.

2.4 The overall tally of responses to the consultation was:

- For: 12
- Against: 4
- Neutral: 9

2.5 The key reasons for those in favour were the anticipated reduction in heavy vehicles along the routes and associated reductions in noise, vibration, and pollution. Those in favour also were of the view that re-classification would reduce damage to the roads and help reduce the number of accidents.

2.6 Those against cited concerns regarding the future maintenance of the roads and lack of technical information to enable an informed response to the consultation. Those against also mentioned costs to the Council in altering signage and concerns regarding winter gritting standards.

### Traffic Flow Analysis

2.7 Officers have undertaken a detailed analysis of the potential effects upon traffic flows of the proposed re-classification. This work drew substantially on the Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) Diamond Area Report (November 2020).

2.8 A significant finding of the traffic flow analysis was that the vast majority (93%) of HGV trips on the A1123 are classed as local i.e. they have 'business' in the area. As these vehicles need to use the A1123 it is very unlikely that reclassification would have any impact on the number of HGVs using the road.

2.9 Regarding car and LGV traffic using the A1123, approximately 80% of this was local trips meaning that the vehicles had some purpose to be in the area. As most of the traffic on the A1123 is local, there is limited potential for traffic to use other routes, as the vehicles need to be in the area. Therefore, it is highly likely that the reclassification of the A1123 would have no impact on the volume of both good vehicles and lighter traffic using the road. A possible benefit of this intervention would be the ability to use traffic calming features that would not be possible to implement on an A road.

### Financial Implications

2.10 DfT distributes a significant proportion of capital funds for highways maintenance to local authorities using a formula. This "needs-based" formula very largely considers the lengths of roads of differing classes for which authorities are responsible. The formula applies a greater weighting for 'A' roads than it does for 'B' and 'C' class roads. Each km of 'A' road is worth more to the Authority than a Km of 'B' road.

2.11 It follows from the above that the reclassification of these roads from 'A' to 'B' will mean that the Council receives less money each year, on an ongoing basis. The actual loss to the

Authority for any given year will depend upon the total amount of funding distributed via the formula and will vary on that basis.

2.12 The effect that the proposed reclassifications would have been for CCC are set out below by financial year for illustrative purposes. This is likely to be indicative of the level of future losses:

- 2019/20      Loss of £200,000
- 2020/21      Loss of £322,000
- 2021/22      Loss of £244,000

2.13 DfT allocates capital funding via this formula to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA). The total provided to the CPCA is then split between CCC and PCC in agreed proportions. Since the formula affects the amount allocated to the CPCA, the proposed re-classification would also impact PCC under the current arrangements. It is for this reason that PCC have objected to the proposed declassification.

The effect that the proposed reclassifications would have been for PCC are set out below by financial year for illustrative purposes. This is likely to be indicative of the level of future losses:

- 2019/20      Loss of £46,000
- 2020/21      Loss of £74,000
- 2021/22      Loss of £56,000

2.14 There would also be a one-off cost to the Council of replacing and altering road signs to reflect the change in classifications. No detailed work has been undertaken to form an accurate schedule of work, but it is estimated by officers that the cost of this work for designs and works would be roughly around £10,000.

2.15 Given the re-classification would cause an annual loss in funding it is proposed not to implement the change at this time but to do some further analysis and consider options for implementing traffic calming measures.

### 3. Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1 Communities at the heart of everything we do

The following bullet point sets out details of implications identified by officers:

- Officers have pursued the work to prepare this report following a local County Councillor's motion to full council as explained in paragraph 1.1

### 3.2 A good quality of life for everyone

The following bullet point sets out details of implications identified by officers:

- If the outcome of reclassification leads to fewer HGVs travelling on the roads that are currently the A1123 and A1421 then this could have a positive impact on the quality of life of people living on these roads. However, the Diamond Area report and technical analysis conclude that changing the road classification is unlikely to lead to fewer HGVs and other vehicles using the route.
- Any traffic that were displaced from these roads would need to use alternative routes, which might adversely impact upon the quality of life for those living on or near to those routes.

### 3.3 Helping our children learn, develop and live life to the full

There are no significant implications for this priority

### 3.4 Cambridgeshire: a well-connected, safe, clean, green environment

The following bullet point sets out details of implications identified by officers:

- If the outcome of declassification leads to fewer HGVs travelling on the A1123 and A142 then this could have a positive impact in terms of a safer, cleaner, greener environment for the towns and villages along the route. However, the Diamond Area report and technical analysis conclude that changing the road classification is unlikely to lead to fewer HGVs and other vehicles using the route

### 3.5 Protecting and caring for those who need us

There are no significant implications for this priority.

## 4. Significant Implications

### 4.1 Resource Implications

The report above sets out details of significant implications in paragraph 2.12

### 4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

### 4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

### 4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category

### 4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

The report above sets out details of significant implications in paragraph 2.1

### 4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

The report sets out details of significant implications in paragraphs 1.1 and 2.1

### 4.7 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications within this category

#### 4.8 Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas

##### 4.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Neutral Status:

Explanation: no significant implications

##### 4.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Neutral Status:

Explanation: there may be some impact on the route drivers take but this is unlikely to be significant given the primary use of the road is for local journeys.

##### 4.8.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management.

Neutral Status:

Explanation: no significant implications

##### 4.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Neutral Status:

Explanation: no significant implications

##### 4.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability and management:

Neutral Status:

Explanation: no significant implications

##### 4.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.

Neutral Status:

Explanation: If the outcome of declassification leads to fewer HGVs travelling on the A1123 and A1421 then this could have a positive impact in terms of transport emissions in the towns and villages along the route. However, the Diamond Area report and technical analysis conclude that changing the road classification is unlikely to lead to fewer HGVs and other vehicles using the route

##### 4.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.

Neutral Status:

Explanation: no significant implications

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Sarah Heywood

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement? Yes

Name of Officer: Henry Swan

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law? Yes

Name of Legal Officer: Amy Brown

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?

Yes

Name of Officer: Elsa Evans

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?

Yes

Name of Officer: Sarah Silk

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes

Name of Officer: Richard Lumley

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health?

Yes

Name of Officer: Iain Green

If a Key decision, have any Environment and Climate Change implications been cleared by the Climate Change Officer?

Yes

Name of Officer: Emily Bolton

## 5. Source documents

### 5.1 Source documents and locations

Highways Act section 12 (3)

[Highways Act 1980 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

DfT guidance on reclassifying roads

[Classifying roads and organising the primary route network - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/classifying-roads-and-organising-the-primary-route-network)

Consultation responses

See Appendix 2

HGV Diamond Area Study

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/transport-funding-bids-and-studies/transport-studies>

Highways Operational Standards (HOS)

[A4 Portrait-blue \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://www.cmis.uk.com/)