



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr Tim Oliver
Leader of the Council
Surrey County Council
Cockshot Hill
Woodhatch
Reigate
Surrey

Our reference: BS29774

30 July 2024

Dear Cllr Oliver,

Response to Surrey County Council's consultation on an experimental prohibition on heavy goods vehicles in Weybridge

I write in response to Surrey County Council's consultation regarding an experimental prohibition on heavy goods vehicles in Weybridge.

As MP for Runnymede and Weybridge, my mission is to keep Runnymede and Weybridge moving, and reducing noise and air pollution and dealing with HGVs using small roads inappropriately is an important part of this mission. I therefore strongly welcome Surrey County Council's proposed trial HGV ban, which encompasses Brooklands Road and other key residential streets.

Runnymede and Weybridge is a fantastic place to live because of its excellent transport links, thriving towns and access to nature and leisure amenities. A range of international and national companies continue to choose our constituency as home to their business operations, partly due to its easy access to Heathrow Airport and key national highways such as the M25, M3, and A3.

However, the flip side of this is the impact on residents' quality of life that high volumes of traffic and congestion on our roads can cause. Proximity to the UK's busiest motorways and major A roads means that we often also experience additional traffic through our towns and villages from diversion routes. These diversions exacerbate the disruption and risk already caused by the large number of HGVs on our streets.

The strength of feeling in our community on this matter was demonstrated by the resident petition concerning HGVs on the Brooklands Road which attracted over 1200 signatures, and to which this consultation responds. You will also be aware from our ongoing discussions on tackling this issue that HGV traffic is one of the local concerns about which I am most frequently contacted by residents. I am therefore grateful for your and Surrey Highways' work on looking at potential solutions to this persistent problem which affects so many people in Weybridge and surrounding areas.

However, I want to acknowledge at the outset that HGV traffic is not a challenge restricted to the town of Weybridge. Many other parts of the constituency, especially Cobham, Woodham, New Haw, Lyne, Chertsey, and Egham, continue to be detrimentally affected by both routine HGV presence, as well as periods of acute disturbance – sometimes overnight – caused by HGV traffic being diverted away from the M25 when closures or roadworks take place. I will continue my work with SCC and National Highways to support strategies to mitigate the impact of HGV traffic on residents in those areas.

In relation to the central proposals contained in this consultation, I would like to make the following points.

Specific local concerns to Weybridge

Alongside the Brooklands Road, Church Street, which approaches Weybridge Town centre from the south, has been disproportionately impacted by high volumes of HGV traffic travelling between Brooklands Business Park and Junction 11 of the M25. This is a busy vehicular route, but also a narrow one which is flanked by local businesses and used by many pedestrians to access the amenities offered by Weybridge town centre. Many constituents have contacted me to share descriptions and photographs of the safety hazard and traffic disruption that HGVs on this route are causing.

These vehicles regularly cause congestion while they proceed slowly, navigating their way around parked cars and the small roundabout where Church Street meets the A317 forking towards Balfour Road and Weybridge High Street. The presence of such large vehicles on Church Street reduces visibility for drivers and pedestrians alike, and increases the risk of accidents occurring.

One especially concerning report described an HGV mounting the pavement on its passenger side as it came off the roundabout with Balfour Road and driving the entire length of the stretch between the roundabout and restaurants opposite the end of Bridge Road into the path of a group of pedestrians.

Residents of St George's Avenue have complained about the speed and frequency of HGVs on this route, and the impact on road surface quality in terms of causing and exacerbating potholes.

The closure of Heath Road and Hanger Hill to HGV traffic under the proposed trial ban should help to deter HGV traffic around the pedestrian routes used for accessing schools on the north side of Weybridge, which has been reported as a safety concern by residents taking their children to school on foot.

I regularly see for myself HGVs using this area of Weybridge inappropriately, and for all the reasons above I strongly welcome that the trial ban will extend beyond the Brooklands Road to encompass these and other residential roads, bringing relief to residents and pedestrians.

Monitoring the impact of any trial ban on other areas of the constituency and businesses

While the priority for this consultation is the implementation of a trial ban which mitigates the challenges faced by residents resulting from HGV traffic in and around Weybridge, it will be necessary to monitor carefully whether and how the trial ban affects HGV traffic on other routes and towns across the constituency.

By way of example, it is unclear the extent to which Balfour Road is currently being used as an access route for HGV traffic travelling from a southerly direction towards Weybridge Business Park. Operations on this site already generate significant HGV traffic which impacts residents of the Poets Corner Housing development in Addlestone in terms of traffic and noise. It is possible that the trial ban may cause an increase in HGV traffic on the A317 (Woburn Hill), which provides access to the only vehicular routes in and out of Poets Corner.

It is expected that most HGV traffic travelling to Weybridge Business Park already travels via Woburn Hill; however, I would be grateful if SCC could provide details of their approach to monitoring the traffic impact of the trial ban both in this area and across neighbouring towns in the constituency.

I will also continue my engagement, and support SCC's engagement, with companies whose drivers will need to change their existing practices to monitor the impact of the trial ban on their operations and look at how they plan to adapt to this in a way that maintains effective business operations but does not transfer the impact of HGV traffic disproportionately to other areas of the constituency.

Effective harnessing of highways data and feedback from residents and businesses from any trial ban will be essential in determining the longer-term approach to this important issue. In this regard, I would welcome further discussions with the Highways team on their plans for obtaining information from this trial to monitor what worked well and what could be adjusted to maximise the benefits of any longer-term ban for residents and businesses.

Coordination with National Highways and utility companies

Periodic spikes in HGV traffic in Weybridge – and across the constituency – are often caused by roadworks on the M25 and A3 forcing traffic onto local roads. Constituents on certain residential roads in Chertsey have had to endure many periods of significant HGV traffic overnight when traffic is diverted from the M25.

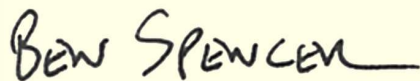
I have been working closely with National Highways and liaising with the Surrey Highways team to call for enhanced coordination and diversion routes that cause the least possible disruption for residents when roadworks on the M25 and streetworks by utility companies are underway.

Clear guidance on appropriate diversion routes and plenty of advance warning will be more important than ever for episodes of road closures and works during the trial ban. These measures should help to prevent traffic disruption and HGVs inadvertently using unsuitable alternative routes to reach their destinations.

I look forward to continuing to support Surrey County Council both in relation to the implementation of the trial ban and the wider issue of tackling the impact of HGV traffic across the constituency of Runnymede and Weybridge.

If you have any questions regarding the matters raised in this consultation response, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Ben Spencer MP
Runnymede and Weybridge

CC: Matt Furniss – Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Economic Growth – Surrey County Council