

Capita Symonds' (Goodmans) proposed Vehicle Identification System for Andover Business Park

Introduction

1. The scheme has two aims: to count the number of HGVs leaving Andover Business Park (ABP) each hour (so that a limit of 85/hr can be enforced) and to detect vehicles that leave or enter ABP via prohibited routes. Prohibited routes for HGVs are (a) A342 towards Weyhill, (b) Weyhill Road towards Andover town centre, (c) A343 Churchill Way West (Andover ring road) and (d) A3057 to Stockbridge (suggested by HCC). In addition Monxton Road would be a prohibited route for any class of vehicle.
2. The scheme operates by using induction loop and piezo sensors to recognise HGVs leaving and entering ABP. A simple hourly count indicates whether or not the hourly limit has been breached. The number plates of all vehicles leaving and entering are also read and noted. The number plates of all vehicles are also read at the nearest points on each of the prohibited roads and any matches with those of HGVs entering or leaving ABP (or all vehicles in the case of Monxton Road) signify potential violations for which the ABP managers could be fined. A white list will hold the vehicle registration numbers of HGVs making permitted deliveries to local stores on the prohibited routes and of employees living along or near Monxton Road.

3. Objections

4. The A343 to Salisbury should also be a prohibited route. Tesco's Andover distribution centre is already planned to deliver to many stores in the Ringwood/Bournemouth/Poole area and the expected future expansion of the distribution network to SW England could add to the A343 traffic through Abbots Ann, Wallop, Salisbury and beyond. Prohibiting HGV use of the A3057 could add to use of the A343 to Salisbury which would be a considerably shorter route to much of the south west than would a route via the trunk road network (i.e. via A303/A34/M27/A31).
5. We very much welcome the proposal (2.3) to eliminate employee cars from Monxton Road except from those on a "white list". However we are concerned that maintenance of the white list is entirely in the control of the management company and there is no indication is given of how the integrity of the white list can be checked and, in any event, maintenance of the list will not be easy with employees changing cars or giving each other lifts etc. We suggest that it would be more practical just to have a blanket ban on all employee vehicles using Monxton Road, even if it means some employees having to drive further.
6. The definition of the class of goods vehicle (HGV) that will be detected is ambiguous (para. 2.1). We suggest that all vehicles which (i) pass the induction loop threshold test, or (ii) have three or more axles should be included in the scheme. There is no reason to exclude 2-axle HGVs.
7. There seems no justification for allowing an hourly limit as high as 85 HGVs leaving ABP when the Transport Assessment (para. 3.8) quotes Tesco as saying that there will be no more than 40 outgoing HGVs/hour during the morning period. **As Goodman state that Tesco will contribute 83% of the HGV traffic (1657 out of 2000 HGV movements), there seems no justification for allowing more than 50 outgoing HGVs from ABP during any one hour.**
8. The proposal (3.28) is that outgoing HGVs should be counted every discrete clock hour throughout the day (00 to 01am, 01 to 02 am etc). This is not sufficient, since in any one elapsed hour, e.g. 07:30 to 08:30, it would be theoretically possible to have 170 HGVs leaving ABP without violating the 85/clock hour limit. To reduce this risk, HGV numbers need to be monitored over a sliding time window that advances by no more than half an hour at a time.
9. The assertion (2.9) that capping the outward flow of HGVs to 85/hr will effectively eliminate problems due to convoys of more than one HGV forming and entering the A303 is false. With vehicles leaving at random times at an overall rate of 85/hr, and several sets of traffic lights to negotiate before reaching A303(E), there will be a far from insignificant chance of a convoy of two or more HGVs building up at the traffic lights.
10. The report (2.7) gives the impression that the control of vehicle movements is enforceable via lease agreements. However the planning authority will not be a party to any such leases and therefore cannot directly enforce control over their terms; it is also unclear what will happen in the event of prospective tenants refusing to accept the terms of such leases. If the terms are accepted by a tenant, can violations be penalised in a legally enforceable way? We very much doubt it.

11. We strongly object to the fact that it is council tax payers that will effectively pick up the substantial bill for the installation, maintenance and monitoring of this system. The Green Travel Plan (page 55) states that the scheme will be funded out of the £2m Section 106 payment to the highways authority, thus diverting money away from other necessary highway improvements and leaving Hampshire residents to pay once all of the Section 106 payment is used up. The developers and ABP management company should jointly be required to fund all aspects of this scheme without affecting the S106 monies.
12. There is no mention at all of financial penalties for route transgressions; neither the payer nor payee of fines is discussed. In our view the payees should jointly be TVBC and HCC who would then both have a direct financial interest in checking and testing the integrity of the system.
13. The site management company has a vested interest in not detecting transgressions and should not be allowed to administer the system which should, instead, be operated by a third party contractor appointed by HCC but paid for by the site management company.
14. The proposed web interface should be via the TVBC portal. However we do not see why only TVBC should be permitted to interrogate the database (5.3). It is the public that are affected by transgressions and, in the spirit of the Freedom of Information act, there should not be secret data being passed between the site management (or the system operator) and TVBC.
15. The overall system for monitoring vehicle flows is complex and untested and yet it is vital for protecting communities against HGVs using unsuitable roads and against employee cars making rat-runs through the historic local villages south-west of Andover. We believe there are many unresolved technical issues, some of which are noted below, and a condition of planning consent should be that a prototype of the system should be adequately demonstrated before site construction work can commence.

Unresolved details and potential problems

1. Capita Symonds admit (2.12) that the induction loop technology is imprecise at determining vehicle size (presumably the mass of steel is sensed - which could be similar for lorries of different capacity).
2. Although the report states the different sensors that will be used, there is no indication as to how the information from the different sensors will be correlated i.e. tied to the same vehicle, which could be a problem when a number of vehicles pass by the sensors in rapid succession.
3. The hard-wired communication system proposed (3.18) is unlikely to be viable for more remote automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) points, such as on the A3057.
4. The report states (3.26) that when an HGV number is read on a prohibited route which matches that of an HGV that left ABP, a photograph of the number plate and the vehicle will be captured. However, for incoming vehicles the situation is more complicated as one will not know a violation has taken place until the vehicle has passed the monitoring station at the ABP entrance. This means that the images of many hundreds of vehicles will have to be captured and temporarily stored on each of the incoming prohibited routes, considerably adding to the data processing task.
5. Vehicle number plate records will have to be stored for at least the maximum time it will take a vehicle to travel between the remote monitoring station and ABP entrance/exit. Determination of this maximum time will have to take into account the possibility of severe congestion between the two points and the possibility that the vehicle driver will decide to lay up (e.g. in an A303 or local layby or garage) between the two points - a highly possible occurrence since we believe arrival time slots are precisely defined and drivers often time the end of their permitted hours to approximately coincide with the end of their delivery.
6. There is no indication of how the system would operate if part of the A303 is closed due to an incident (a not uncommon occurrence) and official diversions put in place which include prohibited routes.
7. The proposed white list, which includes vehicles making deliveries to local stores (3.25), will need to have continual additions and deletions as these deliveries are initiated and completed. There is no suggestion that this task would be automated, and automation may be technically difficult, but without automation the task will be highly labour-intensive and error prone.
8. There is no indication of how the system would cope with visitors to ABP.
9. There is no indication is given of how the integrity of the white list can be checked. It could be abused or neglected, especially if maintained manually, so that many unauthorised vehicles eventually find their way onto it.