

District Councillor Update

Emily O'Brien – August 2026

I continue to be busy following up residents' issues relating to housing and as ever planning has been a crucial concern. I submitted a statement to the recent planning committee meeting and was pleased at the result – though under the new rules this decision is now in the hands of government.

I have again had residents contact me having heard rumours that London local authorities are planning to use Ringmer development to house people on their waiting list. This was raised most recently with regard to the land adjacent to the Green Man. I therefore asked our officers to contact Aster, and their senior land manager confirmed:

"I can categorically confirm that there is no intention to sell the site to any other party, including Lewisham. There is absolutely no foundation to this suggestion.

This scheme is funded by Homes England under the Strategic Partnership Programme, and Aster remains fully committed to working in partnership with Lewes District Council to deliver these much-needed affordable homes "

These rumours are really unhelpful as they add distress to an already difficult situation, if you hear any please do try to reassure people that they are just rumours.

ESCC freight strategy (continuing inaction on.....)

You'll be aware Johnny; Lucy and I put considerable effort into campaigning on reducing HGVs. The motion we drafted was passed in 2022, alongside a public petition and a well-attended and well publicised public protest on Ringmer village green (see Argus, Sussex Express). The motion asked LDC to write to government re satnavs (letters attached) – government were unhelpful - and also had the ask of LDC "To ask Council officers to expand the current validation requirements for planning applications for major development, so that routing away from narrow, unsuitable and residential roads and away from villages becomes an integral feature of any planning." The major focus was on ESCC, for whom the ask was to introduce a lorry route network (or freight routing network) as they have done in West Sussex, i.e. to take a more strategic approach to routing HGVs not just see all A and B roads as equal fair game. Via a cumbersome and protracted process ESCC eventually agreed to look at doing so, as part of a consultation on a new freight strategy which would form part of new Transport Strategy (LTP4). The parish council, LDC and others took the trouble to respond to this consultation, strongly supporting the introduction of a freight routing network.

Looking at the various policies recently we discovered that this long awaited freight strategy was actually slipped out before Christmas and is basically refusing any change of approach and touting same old business as usual 'All A and B roads are fair game' - disappointing to say the least. This is what the summary says:

"Consideration has been given within the strategy to introducing a freight routing network so that Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) be redirected away from villages. However, on balance, this would place additional pressures on the limited A roads in the county, impacting on overall journey times for all road users, increasing journey times for HGV drivers and costs for operators (which in turn may be passed onto customers) due to vehicles having to take a longer distance and timed route. Therefore, the existing freight routing network policy for HGVs to use A and B roads wherever possible remains. However, the draft Freight Strategy includes several policies related to improving relationships with district and borough councils, the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) and communities to gather evidence and a greater understanding of freight-related issues, in particularly affected villages, and identifying whether any alternative measures could be introduced which could potentially reduce or mitigate the negative experiences of HGVs through villages. (at <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/roads-transport/transport-planning/local-transport-plan/local-transport-plan-4/freight-strategy/executive-summary>)

We are mystified as to what 'mitigating negative experiences' might look like for residents who literally can't sleep at night, or who are afraid to walk along village roads with their children - other than actually reducing the numbers of HVGs - and have written to ESCC to ask what this means. We'll let you know any response.

The new administration at ESCC so far doesn't seem to be looking to change policy on this, or other aspects of HGVs or other related issues such as allowing 20mph areas where residents wish this (a longstanding ask of Ringmer) though we continue to push for these wider changes. Meanwhile we are taking a slightly different approach focussing on 'hotspots' which will highlight the overarching issues, so continue to put the pressure on, but which also stand some chance of success under the current policy, i.e. they don't relate to B roads which are basically excluded from any measures. We are planning a press release and relating to Church Hill in Ringmer initially as there are a number of concerned residents there.

Separately, from an LDC perspective I am not clear how well the requirements of the 2022 motion to ""To ask Council officers to expand the current validation requirements for planning applications for major development, so that routing away from narrow, unsuitable and residential roads and away from villages becomes an integral feature of any planning"" is being implemented. I am aware parish councillors probably have a better overview of the CEMPs than I do, if anyone is able to send me a brief summary of the applications in the last 3 years and how well they have achieved this aim at validation stage, I'd be super grateful so I can follow up with planning.

Emily O'Brien (She/her)

Green Party Councillor for Ouse Valley & Ringmer

Cabinet Member for Nature, Climate & Food Systems at Lewes District Council

Leader of the Green Group at the Local Government Association (LGA)



Lewes District Council

Mark Harper MP
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15 December 2022

Councillor Stephen Gauntlett
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Dear Secretary of State

Re: Reducing HGV traffic affecting villages and narrow, unsuitable roads

At its Full Council meeting on 21 November 2022, Lewes District Council approved a motion to seek to reduce how HGV traffic is affecting villages and its use of narrow, unsuitable roads.

The motion and its preamble are set out below:

The Government's figures show that HGV traffic nationally is increasing. The most recent figures, up to September 2021¹, show that whilst car traffic decreased, there was an 8.9% increase in HGV traffic in just one year.

The growth in HGV traffic affects noise, air quality, and safety in many of our local villages and towns and can have a real impact on quality of life for those living on affected streets, causing sleepless nights and even mental health problems. It also affects cyclists and pedestrians, especially older or vulnerable people and those with small children.

One cause of HGV traffic on unsuitable roads is the use by lorry drivers of google maps and/or satnavs which are only intended for car use. In extreme cases, HGVs are being routed up narrow and unsuitable routes and becoming stuck.

Following a request from Councillor Emily O'Brien, the Local Government Association has now renewed an earlier call to make mandatory for HGVs the use of commercial satnavs (see <https://trans.info/en/sat-navs-lorries-301372>).

Locally, a large volume of HGV traffic is caused by new development, and residents frequently report frustration that the appropriate routing of construction traffic is not given sufficient care and attention as part of the planning process, and may feel like an afterthought, when from their perspective it should be front and centre.

Currently the Construction Traffic Management Plan required by the council at the validation stage requests information on the 'level of vehicle movement and routing arrangements' however new wording could better encourage the routing of construction traffic away from narrow, residential or unsuitable roads. This would require any major

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/provisional-road-traffic-estimates-great-britain-october-2020-to-september-2021#:~:text=in%20Great%20Britain%20for%20the%20year%20ending%20September%202021,.%2C%20an%20increase%20of%200.4%25>.

Development to consider this important issue at the very beginning of the planning process and send a strong message that the Council takes this issue seriously.

More widely, there is no strategic approach to HGV traffic routing in our District, with East Sussex County treating all A roads and B roads across the county as equally suitable for lorry use, and failing to respond to the increasing levels of traffic and the concerns of residents.

There is substantial local support for a local campaign to ask East Sussex County Council to adopt a lorry route network across the county, similar to the one in West Sussex, which would encourage HGVs to take the best route not just the shortest one, and avoid villages and narrow and residential streets. A protest on Ringmer Village Green in October 2022 in support attracted over 60 attendees.

This Council resolves:

- 1) To ask the Cabinet Member for Planning and Infrastructure to write to the Secretary of State for Transport, Mark Harper, asking for the Minister's view on the Local Government's Association's call for HGVs to be required to use commercial satnavs, and expressing this council's support for such a measure;
- 2) To ask the Cabinet Member for Planning and Infrastructure to write to East Sussex County Council to express this Council's support for the campaign for a strategic lorry route network, similar to the one already adopted by West Sussex; and
- 3) To ask Council officers to expand the current validation requirements for planning applications for major development, so that routing away from narrow, unsuitable and residential roads and away from villages becomes an integral feature of any planning permission discussed or granted, and is thought about at the earliest possible stage.

As set out at 1) above, I would be grateful if you can respond to the call for HGVs to be required to use of commercial satnavs, and confirm if you would be willing to take steps to put this into place.

I look forward to hearing from you on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Gauntlett', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Councillor Stephen Gauntlett
Cabinet Member for Planning
and Infrastructure



Department for Transport

Councillor Stephen Gauntlett
Cabinet Member for Planning and Infrastructure
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From the Parliamentary
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Our Ref: MC/419350

12 January 2023

Dear *Clr Gauntlett,*

Thank you for your letter of 15 December to the Secretary of State, about required Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) to use commercial satellite navigation (satnav) systems. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this issue.

The Department recognises that well-designed and correctly used satnav systems have the potential to reduce congestion and improve safety on the road. However, satnav information is only ever advisory. The Department is aware that manufacturers of satnavs produce special satnav devices for HGV drivers to provide them with routing information appropriate to their vehicle. All road users benefit from clear directions, including HGV drivers however, routing guidance provided by satnavs should only ever be considered advisory. It is for motorists to determine the best route for their journey and, whether following a satnav or not, the same rules of the road apply.

We believe that legislation would be a costly, bureaucratic and inappropriate way of dealing with the problem, therefore for several years we have worked with interested parties, such as freight associations, local authorities and satnav companies, to improve the service users get from satnavs. Our view is that cooperation and communication is the best way to ensure that the latest information is made available to HGV drivers.

The Department invested £3 million to help create a digital road map with one aim being to ensure traffic keeps moving efficiently and safely on suitable routes. This map was developed by Ordnance Survey and includes information such as road widths, traffic calming measures and height and weight restrictions which could be used in satnavs or other devices to improve the quality and accuracy of routing advice. It could also be linked to other information, including planned road works. The map is available at: www.os.uk/highways.

The routing of vehicles is entirely a matter for the local traffic authority, to decide on without Government interference. However, I will be pleased to explain what options are available to them.

Local authorities have a duty under section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, to exercise their functions under the Act, which include the provision of traffic signs, to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of traffic, so far as practicable having regard to various matters including the amenity of the area through which the road runs. Therefore, they are free to make their own decisions about the streets and roads under their care, provided they take account of the relevant legislation. They are also responsible for ensuring that their actions are within the law and are accountable to local people for their decisions and their performance.

The legislation that prescribes traffic signs for local authority use is the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016, as amended. This provides various route signing options for authorities to consider. There are regulatory signs which can prohibit the use of certain roads by the width, height, length or weight of a vehicle, by means of traffic regulation orders which are legally enforceable. The Department has published guidance on these signs in the Traffic Signs Manual (TSM). We advise that when vehicle size limit signs are deployed, it is important that the alternative route is clearly signed not only at the start of the diversion but also at the last most convenient natural place where a vehicle might divert, even though this might be some distance before the actual start of the diversion route. TSM can be viewed at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-signs-manual.

There is also an informatory sign type to advise large / heavy vehicles not to take an unsuitable route. The design uses a lorry pictogram with a red diagonal line through it to indicate "not for heavy goods vehicles". As it is informatorily only, a traffic regulation order is not required, thus reducing the administrative work by the authority.

I hope this enables you to progress your engagement on this matter with East Sussex County Council.

Best wishes,



RICHARD HOLDEN MP

MINISTER FOR ROADS AND LOCAL TRANSPORT