

APPENDIX G

SIGNING STRATEGY SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

1.0 Background

1.1 Legal Framework

Whilst the County Council has the power¹ to cause or permit traffic signs to be placed on or near to a road, there is no obligation to do so.

Notwithstanding the above, the County Council does have a duty to exercise its powers *“to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic”²*, and to *“avoid, eliminate or reduce road congestion or other disruption to the movement of traffic on their road network, or a road network for which another authority is the traffic authority”³*.

In the satisfaction of that duty, the power to place traffic signs has long been accepted as good practice, and there is now a general expectation from motorists that direction signs will have been placed to assist them in selecting an appropriate route, and in the avoidance of any hazards/prohibitions that they otherwise might encounter.

2.0 Adopted Approach

2.1 Design of signs

All traffic signs are to be will be designed and installed in line with the most current version of the regulations and general directions available at the time; that currently being the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016.

2.2 Destination and Route Hierarchy

The very nature of transport networks is hierarchical, and traffic signing is no different. Rather than attempting to sign every conceivable destination from all

¹ Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, Section 65

² Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, Section 122

³ Traffic Management Act 2004, Section 16

points; which would be impracticable, there is an expectation that motorists will use strategic national routes and destinations as way finders, before picking up more locally relevant signs the closer they come to their target destination.

For the purpose of this strategy, 5 hierarchical levels of signing have been identified (H1 – H5). Destinations and routes that are intended to be signed can be seen in **Table 1**

2.2.1 H1 - Primary Destinations & Primary Route Network (PRN)

Primary destinations are defined by the DfT, and are considered to be strategically important settlements on the national network.

Whilst the determination of a primary destination is a discretionary one, factors such as the size of the settlement, any association with a key port/airport, its geographical significance, and its proximity to other primary destinations are all factors taken into consideration.

The Primary Route Network (PRN) is comprised of higher quality roads, linking all primary destinations across the country, and therefore forms the basis for most regional and national travel. The PRN is designated from Local Authority roads, as well as the trunk roads and motorways managed by Highways England (formerly Highways Agency) that form the Strategic Road Network (SRN).

Primary destinations and the PRN are the most strategically significant way finders on the network, and as such are at the top of the signing hierarchy.

Destinations and roads categorised as H1 will be signed extensively on the County's PRN and from A and B classified local roads.

2.2.2 H2 - Secondary Destinations & Classified Roads

Secondary destinations are those which are considered to have a significantly geographic or economic importance on a County level. Typically these will be larger market towns with close links to the PRN such as Ashby de la Zouch and Coalville.

Classified 'A' roads which do not form a part of the PRN are also considered to be secondary destinations.

Secondary destinations and the classified road network is relied upon to direct motorists who have left the PRN and are likely to be navigating towards their final destination, or finding their way back to the PRN.

Destinations and roads categorised as H2 will be signed extensively on the County's A and B classified roads, and where appropriate from the County's PRN.

2.2.3 H3 – Tertiary Destinations

Unlike primary and secondary destinations; tertiary destinations are rarely used to assist in way finding over a great distance. Instead, they are usually the target destination for the motorist.

In view of the above, it is the intention that a motorist would follow primary and secondary destinations to take them to within close proximity of their final (tertiary) destination. As such, signing for tertiary destinations will be limited to a comparatively small range; usually, but not exclusively, from the nearest classified road, and where necessary continued along the unclassified road network.

2.2.4 H4 – Commercial sites and Tourism Attractions/Facilities

Commercial and tourism sites are, by their inherent nature, often visited by high numbers of people who are likely to be unfamiliar with the area and may have travelled a significant distance in order to reach them. As they remain a target destination, signing commercial and tourism sites in a similar manner to a tertiary destination will usually be sufficient. However, some commercial and tourism sites are so significant that they may require signing from the PRN and even the SRN. Where this is considered necessary, strict additional criteria from Highways England may need to be satisfied.

2.2.5 H5 – Local Importance

It is common practice to provide traffic signing to a number of destinations in most that will be of local importance, but that are unlikely to have attracted visitors or commuters from very far afield. Typical examples would be local leisure centres or health facilities.

Such destinations will rarely have a prominent part in any signing; usually conveyed by the appropriate symbol on a larger sign, or by dedicated signing on the immediate approach to the site.

H1 Primary		H2 Secondary		H3 Tertiary
<i>Destination</i>	<i>Road</i>	<i>Destination</i>	<i>Road</i>	<i>Destination</i>
Leicester	A6	Lutterworth	A4304	Great Bowden
Northampton	A508	-	B6047	Little Bowden
Kettering	A6	-	-	Foxton
Corby	A4304	-	-	Kibworth
-	-	-	-	Town Centre

H4 – Commercial & Tourism	
<i>Industrial Estates & Business Parks</i>	<i>Tourism Attractions/Facilities</i>
The Point Business Park	The Old Grammar School
Airfield Business Park	Foxton Locks
Euro Business Park	Union Canal Wharf
Riverside Industrial Estate	-
Century Theatre	-

H5 – Local Importance	
<i>Public Buildings/Land</i>	<i>Private Buildings/Land</i>
Health Centre	Railway Station
Hospital(s)	Shopping Areas
Leisure Centre	Recycling Centre
Council Offices	-
Car Parks	-

Table 1 - Destinations to be signed in/from Market Harborough

3.0 Designated Route Signing

3.1 General Principles

Whilst signing should be comprehensive, it should also be strategic; a key consideration of which is the route by which to positively sign the different classes of vehicles, and indeed the array of destinations to which they are headed.

Some prescribed routes are unavoidably necessary in order to avoid hazards or prohibitions for certain classes of vehicles. With specific regard to Market Harborough, the low bridges and environmental weight restrictions are typical examples requiring specific signing in order to guide vehicles along a safe and permitted route.

Even where vehicles are not subject to a prohibition, it would not be an efficient use of resources, or helpful to the motorist to sign all possible routes and destinations from every conceivable point on the network. Furthermore, there are often less suitable routes that for amenity reasons the County Council would not want to promote even though their use may not be prohibited.

In view of each of the above, it is common practice to pre-designate routes for certain destinations and classes of vehicles. Vehicles will be kept on the highest status of classified road for as long as possible before progressively guiding them to lower classified and unclassified roads. The principles of 'signing trees' will be used ensure consistency between signs along the route.

3.2 Diversion / Alternative Routes

3.2.1 Emergency Diversion Routes (EDR)

Highways England work with Local Authorities to sign strategic emergency diversion routes along the local, classified road network so that in the event of an incident such as a serious road traffic collision (RTC) occurring on a motorway or other major road, traffic can follow a pre-designated route around the incident before re-joining that road at a later point.

With particular reference to Market Harborough; high sided vehicles striking the low bridge on Rockingham Road, or RTCs on the A14 between junctions 2 and 3 currently force vehicles onto the Market Harborough network. Without adequate signing to direct those motorists back onto the PRN, it is likely that a proportion of that traffic could use inappropriate/unsuitable routes through the town, including residential areas. In the absence of EDR signing the low bridge on Rockingham Road would be particularly vulnerable due to its location on the A4304, as a high proportion of the diverted traffic would likely be Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV) and may be reliant on satellite navigation devices that could automatically select Rockingham Road due to its status.

Through close liaison with Leicestershire Police and Aone+, who manage the A14 on behalf of Highways England, three EDRs have been identified through Market Harborough that are considered to be beneficial not only to traffic using the PRN, but also on a local level; ensuring wherever possible that disruption is kept to the utmost minimum, and safeguarding the low bridge on Rockingham Road from strikes as a result of diverted traffic.

Signs to TSRGD 2016 and symbols to Schedule 12, Part 11 (as appropriate) will be incorporated onto direction signs to denote the route of the EDR.

3.2.2 Rockingham Road low bridge & alternative route

Whilst EDR signing will direct diverted high sided vehicles along a route avoiding the low bridge on Rockingham Road, it is also necessary to ensure that suitable signing of the low bridge and an alternative route is in place for those vehicles that have not been diverted from the PRN, and consequentially would not be following the EDR symbols.

Advanced warning of the bridge height, accompanied by a positively signed alternative route around the bridge is considered to be the most effective method of achieving this.

3.3 Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) Routing

Good practice dictates that advance signing be provided for weight restrictions to ensure that drivers of HGVs do not inadvertently select a prohibited route, and to facilitate the prosecution of those who opt to consciously contravene an order.

As the restrictions are for purely environmental rather than structural reasons, HGVs are permitted to access premises via a weight restricted road in order to load/unload goods; this will be conveyed with inclusion of the appropriate supplementary signing plates.

Where appropriate, the preferred/alternative routes for HGVs will be proactively signed over and above the notification of a prohibition; this being the approach most likely to ensure compliance and user satisfaction.

4.0 Car Park Signing

4.1 Current Provision

The town is generally well served with off street car parks. Car park signing for some locations is adequate; however the signing provision for some other car parks is entirely absent.

Notwithstanding the above, demand for parking is high, and as a result, the car parks are generally well occupied regardless of the lack of signing.

4.2 Future aspirations

Town centre car parks; a category 'H5' destination in the hierarchy would feature on a future signing strategy. In doing so it is thought that the unnecessary circulation of traffic which contributes negatively to congestion and air quality may be reduced, and an improved visitor experience by those seeking a place to park will support the economic recovery of the town centre.

Liaison with the operators of private (non-Council) car parks would be required to gain their support in being continued/additional signing. The inclusion of the car park's capacity would be an advantageous addition. The possibility of variable message signing displaying the real time availability of spaces should also be considered to determine whether they may be of any added value.