



Central Bedfordshire Local Transport Plan: Appendix D

Freight Strategy

April 2011



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1. Introduction

1.1 LTP Framework

This strategy provides the policy framework to support the management of freight transport in Central Bedfordshire. It addresses the carriage of goods by roads, rail and pipeline within Central Bedfordshire, including the provision of services and utilities and the movement of waste and aggregates from mining activity.

Freight forms one of six journey purpose themes that form the basis to the Local Transport Plan (LTP), which sets out the authority's overarching vision and objectives for transport in the period between April 2011 and March 2026. The framework of the LTP and how freight issues are embedded within the Plan is set out in Figure 1.1.

1.2 Scope of Strategy

The Central Bedfordshire Freight Strategy has been developed with reference to the spatial planning documents for the area, i.e. the North Central Bedfordshire Local Development Framework (LDF) and the Luton and South Central Bedfordshire LDF. It will in turn inform future updates of these policies ensuring a coherent and strategic approach to land use and transport planning.

The Freight Strategy examines the key issues regarding freight in Central Bedfordshire under the following five themes:

- Managing freight on roads;
- Freight facilities for road based transport;
- Servicing and deliveries;
- Information and working with stakeholders; and
- Non-road freight modes.

For each theme a series of policies and supporting schemes have been developed to set out the Authority's approach to managing freight in Central Bedfordshire. There are a number of mechanisms through which the Authority may manage freight in Central Bedfordshire all of which were considered in developing the strategy. For example, the Authority may:

- Use its powers as a Highway Authority to manage the road network, and deploy legal means to restrict the use of particular routes by certain types of vehicles, and provide signing to encourage the use of advisory routes and indicate the location of facilities for use by driver;
- Use its powers as a Local Planning Authority and influence the siting of facilities in locations that deliver greatest benefit for local communities and businesses;
- Help make sure that any adverse effects of new development are avoided or reduced to acceptable levels;



- Through a combination of these approaches, the Strategy aims to shift freight to more sustainable modes such as rail and water but recognises that there is limited scope for this and thus management of freight on roads is an important focus for the Authority, particularly in terms of minimising the impact of freight movements on local communities.

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2. Local Freight Issues

2.1 Context

Central Bedfordshire is some 716 km² in area and home to just over 250,000 people, living in around 107,000 households. It is largely rural in nature. Major settlements include Dunstable and Houghton Regis which form part of the Luton conurbation and also the market town of Leighton Buzzard.

There are a number of large settlements in neighbouring authority areas that influence business and other activities in Central Bedfordshire, including Milton Keynes, Luton, Bedford and Northampton, as highlighted in Figure 2.1.

The M1 motorway runs north-south through Central Bedfordshire, and provides a strategic freight and distribution link. Many centralised warehousing / distribution and production facilities are located along the M1 corridor (particularly in Milton Keynes) to make best use of the road and rail network providing connections to London and north to the Midlands and beyond.

The A1, A6 and A5 also provide north-south connections through the area. Rail connections from London to the north are via the West Coast Mainline, East Coast Mainline and the Midlands Mainline.

East-west movements through the area are less well served. The primary road connections across Central Bedfordshire are via the A507 and A421 with other minor A and B roads providing links to the motorway, truck roads and settlements. However, the main east-west link for strategic traffic in the region is the A14 to the north of Central Bedfordshire.

Therefore, the majority of large goods vehicle movements using the A507 are likely to have an origin or destination in Central Bedfordshire or neighbouring areas. The Marston Vale Line between Bedford and Bletchley, which is primarily a local passenger service, is the only east-west rail connection.

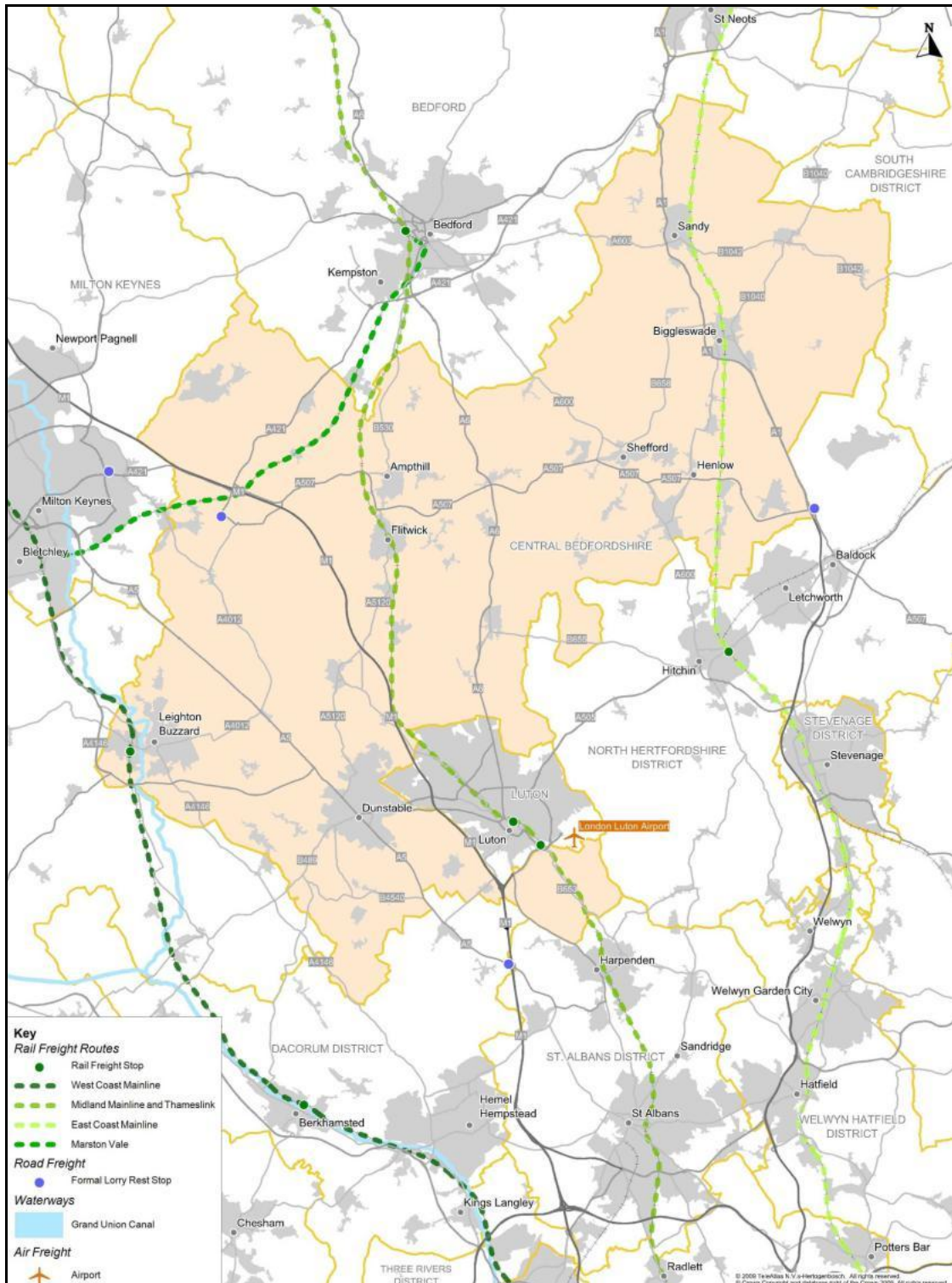
2.2 Key Freight Generators and Destinations

The M1 corridor running through Central Bedfordshire is a strategic location for the warehousing and transportation industry, providing good and fast access to the major strategic/national network.

A number of large industrial parks, many home to national and regional distribution centres of large corporations are located close to M1 Junctions 9 through to 13 and along the A421 linking Bedford to the M1. Indeed improvements to M1 Junctions 10 to 13 and dualling of the A421 to the west of the motorway are partly in response to the impacts upon freight flows attributed to these large facilities.



Figure 2.1: Context Map



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Other sites generating freight movements are located throughout Central Bedfordshire with industrial parks and warehousing facilities clustered around trunk roads by Ampthill / Flitwick, Sandy / Biggleswade, Houghton Regis / Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard / Linslade.



Central Bedfordshire is home to several quarries and aggregates/minerals processing plants, exporting building materials to various locations across the country. In addition the northern part of the area has long provided landfill capacity for the region and London.

Traffic movements associated with most mineral / aggregates and waste sites in Central Bedfordshire are low at an average of 100 movements per site per day¹. Managing the flow of these large vehicles through Central Bedfordshire's towns is required to address community concerns.

2.3 The Freight Industry in Central Bedfordshire

The freight and logistics industry is an important element of the employment for people living and working in Central Bedfordshire. Around one in 20 businesses registered in Central Bedfordshire, (or 310 businesses in 2008) are transport and storage operators. A further 55.2% are engaged in sectors that rely directly upon transport operations including the construction, manufacturing, agriculture and retail sectors.

In terms of employment, 4.8% or around 4,100 people working in Central Bedfordshire in 2008 were employed by transport and storage operators. A further 46.8% worked in industries that rely directly upon transport operations. This breakdown is broadly comparable to that of neighbouring authorities and the East of England region as a whole².

The freight market generally comprises two key functions:

- **Primary distribution (or trunking):** Where goods are moved in bulk between nodes of the supply chain (i.e. raw materials to manufacturing and onto warehousing). Large vehicles (such as heavy good vehicles (HGV) and rail) are utilised and travel predominantly along the national road and rail network over longer distances.
- **Secondary distribution (or delivery):** Occurs following sorting and break-up of bulk goods. Smaller road-based vehicles (such as delivery vans) transport goods from a single point (such as a warehouse – National or Regional Distribution Centre or other) to multiple destinations or customers. Delivery vans may travel along trunk and other local roads and through urban areas.

Freight in Central Bedfordshire also includes the transport of aggregates and waste by road from local quarries to waste sites servicing London and other settlements in the region. Such movements can have considerable local impacts, especially where vehicles move from the strategic network onto local roads.

Freight operators in Central Bedfordshire include many owner-operated road haulage companies acting as both primary and secondary distributors, subject to market demand. Such companies tend to move goods relatively short distances from a single origin to one or more location. In Central Bedfordshire operators include small agricultural businesses that have diversified from farming activity. The sector is thus largely seasonal.

The Authority currently manages the impacts of traffic generated by these small operators through the imposition of planning conditions, detailing prescribed freight routes and other

¹ The exceptions are the Brogborough pit in Marston Vale, the cluster of minerals/aggregates sites around Leighton Buzzard – Linslade, Dunstable Waste in Houghton Regis and a waste site in Arlesey.

² Source: Nomis, Office of National Statistics



operating restrictions. The volume of sole and small operators in Central Bedfordshire suggests there may be an opportunity to better coordinate freight operations through local quality partnerships, co-operatives and /or third party managed alliances including pallet networks and logistics service alliances.

The freight lifted (in tonnes) to / from Central Bedfordshire were principally miscellaneous articles, sand, gravel and clay and miscellaneous manufactured goods³.

2.4 Impacts of Growth on Freight

Significant housing and employment growth is forecast for Central Bedfordshire over the next twenty years. Projected employment growth will be concentrated in Central Bedfordshire's major settlements and include the area to the south of Luton including by the airport, Cranfield Technology Park, Biggleswade, Sandy and should it be delivered the proposed M1 Junction 11a (within the expansion area).

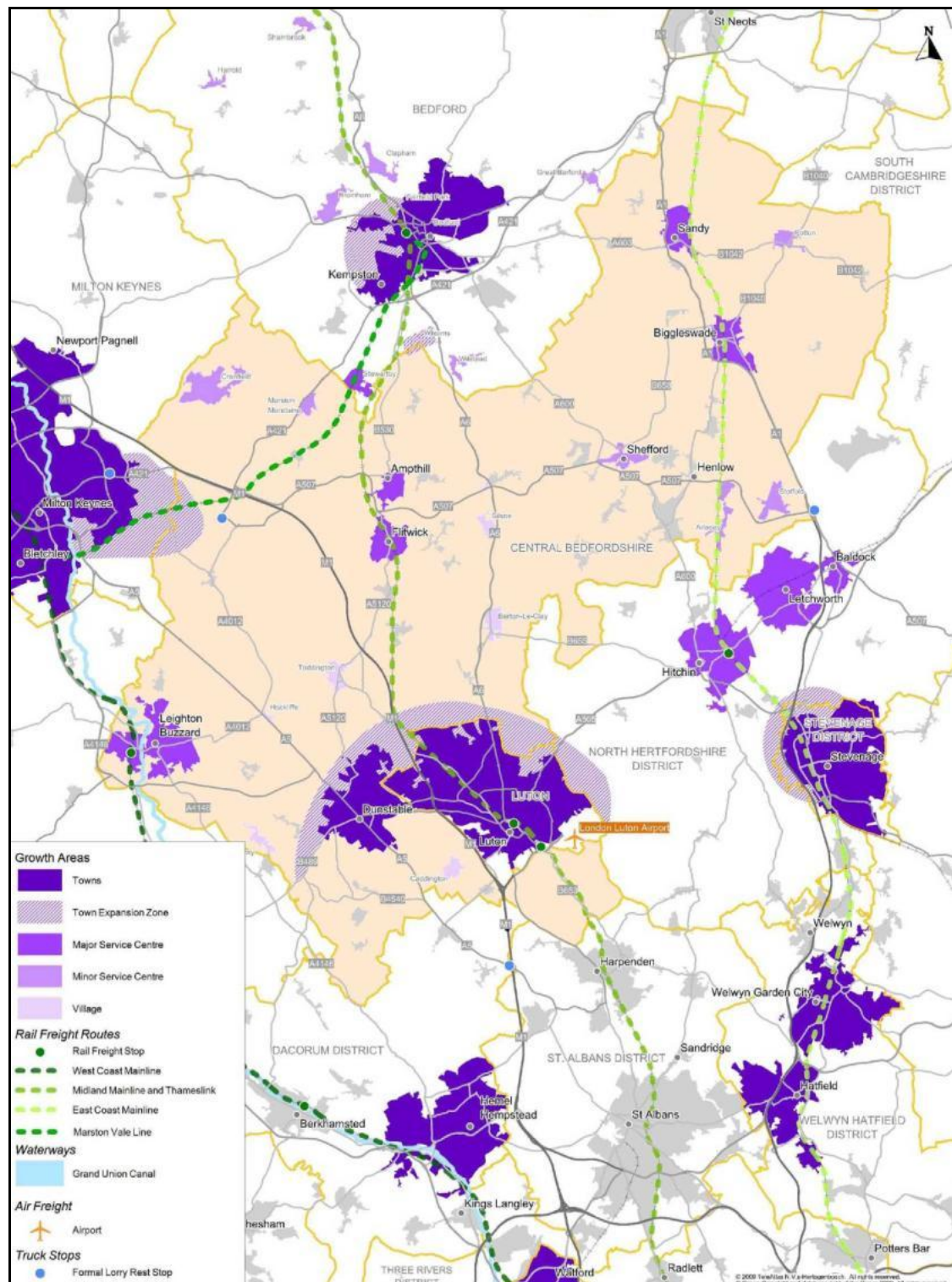
This latter site has been identified as an appropriate location for development of warehousing and distribution premises. There are limited opportunities for growth in employment sites within Leighton Buzzard and Linslade as the conurbation is less well connected to the strategic transport network. Figure 2.2, depicts the key growth sites in and near Central Bedfordshire. Planned growth in Central Bedfordshire will impact on the movement of freight in the following ways:

- Significant construction traffic (comprised of the haulage of aggregates and other building materials) will be generated, concentrating on the expansion area and new settlements such as Wixams on the northern border of Central Bedfordshire. Whilst there may be some opportunity to use rail to transport materials into the area (with unloading at Luton, Elstow, Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal and other nearby terminals) it is likely that construction traffic travelling in Central Bedfordshire will primarily utilise the road network.
- New residential and employment areas will create additional freight activities as goods flow between businesses. Key sites will include north of Luton in the expansion area by the M1, east of Milton Keynes along the M1 corridor and along the A421 towards Bedford.
- Population growth in Central Bedfordshire and the greater South East and East of England regions will lead to an increase in road and rail traffic contributing to the congestion problems already evident on the network.
- The majority of towns and villages projected for growth in Central Bedfordshire are connected to the existing designated freight route network. Exceptions include the minor centres of Eaton Bay, Caddington and Cranfield. Management of freight movements from the network onto local roads to serve construction and employment (e.g. retail; warehousing) sites is likely to be a key issue as development occurs.
- Furthermore, logistics has been identified by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) as a key growth sector of the area. Sufficient floorspace for warehousing, distribution and associated freight activities will be required to accommodate job growth in this sector.

³ CSRG, Department for Transport



Figure 2.2: Key Growth Sites



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3. Policy Context and Objectives

3.1 European Policies

The Freight Strategy sits within an overarching framework encompassing policies at a European, national and local level. The European Commission has adopted an 'Action Plan for Freight Transport Logistics' (2007)⁴ which:

- Promotes innovation, encouraging the use of information and communication technologies in freight;
- Seeks to improve the quality of logistics services by tackling specific bottlenecks that create obstacles to the efficient flow of goods, from lack of parking spaces for trucks to red tape;
- Develops standards for loading units suitable for all modes of transport; and
- Makes a priority of the improvement of efficiency and sustainability of freight transport in urban environments and along the major European transport corridors.

3.2 UK National Policies

Following the appointment of a new Government in May 2010, national policy was placed under review. The policies that are most relevant to freight are outlined below.

Local Transport White Paper

The approach of the coalition Government to local transport policy was established in The Local Transport White Paper 2011.

This sets out the Government's vision for a transport system as an engine for economic growth, but is also greener, safer, and improves our quality of life. The key themes of the White Paper are:

- **Enabling sustainable transport choices:** Investment alone will not tackle transport problems, and people need to be encouraged to choose walking, cycling, and public transport to get around.
- **End-to-end journey:** Making the whole journey by walking, cycling, and public transport convenient and effortless.

⁴ European Commission (2007) - Action Plan To Keep Freight Moving: An Action Plan For Freight Transport Logistics – Directorate General for Energy and Transport, Brussels.



- **Managing traffic:** Development of electric vehicles, improving the street environment for walking and cycling, and better management of parking.
- **Local solutions for local problems:** Decentralising economic and land use powers, and encouraging community involvement so highway authorities can develop their own solutions.
- **The Big Society:** Empowering local communities to encourage and develop sustainable travel, and to hold local authorities to account on delivery.

The White Paper does not mention freight specifically, but a number of elements of the White Paper may have implications for the management of freight. The most notable are the management of the local road network, with the emerging policies on street environments, road classification, intelligent traffic management, and co-ordination on strategic transport infrastructure all likely to have an impact upon freight.

Planning Policies

Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 (PPG13) on Transport, aims to integrate planning and transport at the national, regional, strategic, and local level to:

1. Promote more sustainable transport choices for both people and for moving freight
2. Promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling and
3. Reduce the need to travel, especially by car

PPG13 notes that while road is still likely to be the main mode for many freight movements, land use planning can help promote the transport of freight by alternative modes. PPG13 states that local authorities should consider as part of their local plans:

1. Identify and, where appropriate, protect sites and routes, both existing and potential, which could be critical in developing infrastructure for the movement of freight (such as major freight interchanges including facilities allowing road to rail transfer or for water transport) and ensure that any such disused transport sites and routes are not unnecessarily severed by new developments or transport infrastructure. In relation to rail use, this should be done in liaison with the Strategic Rail Authority which is best placed to advise on the sites and routes that are important to delivering wider transport objectives.
2. Where possible, locate developments generating substantial freight movements such as distribution and warehousing, particularly of bulk goods, away from congested central areas and residential areas, and ensure adequate access to trunk roads.
3. Promote opportunities for freight generating development to be served by rail or waterways by influencing the location of development and by identifying and where appropriate protecting realistic opportunities for rail or waterway connections to existing manufacturing, distribution and warehousing sites adjacent or close to the rail network, waterways or coastal/estuarial ports and
4. On disused transport sites consider uses related to sustainable transport first, before other uses

In Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4) on Planning for Sustainable Economic Development, local planning authorities should ensure that their development plans identifies, protects and promotes key distribution networks, and locates or co-locates developments which generate



substantial transport movements in locations that are accessible (including by rail and water transport where feasible), avoiding congestion and preserving local amenity as far as possible

3.3 Local Policies and Strategies

Central Bedfordshire's Sustainable Communities Strategy sets out the long term vision for area: 'to deliver sustainable growth to ensure a green, prosperous and ambitious place for the benefit of all.' A priority of the Strategy is to develop in Central Bedfordshire a knowledge based economy, building upon the area's good connections and also local learning institutions, business and the skills of the workforce.

The strategy is the responsibility of the Local Strategic Partnership which includes members from the Authority, Town and Parish Councils, emergency services, the health, education, business and third sectors.

Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) contain the Authority's spatial strategy for the Central Bedfordshire, detailing how development will be managed and the local environment and economy protected over the next 20 years.

Central Bedfordshire is covered by two LDFs:

- **The North Central Bedfordshire LDF:** Aims to reduce the need for travel and encourage use of sustainable modes of transport. It also aims to manage use of the existing network better; through using developer contributions to maximise the capacity of the existing network; and add capacity where needed.
- **The Luton and South Central Bedfordshire LDF:** Sets out how Authority will direct projected housing and employment growth to existing urban areas and identified growth areas. Priorities for transport include relieving congestion and achieving modal shift.

As Central Bedfordshire is home to several quarries, disposal and recycling and waste sites, the Bedfordshire and Luton Minerals and Waste Local Plan has also been taken into account. This sets the policy framework for the management of wastes and minerals in the area up to 2015. It identifies the proposed locations for minerals extraction and waste management sites in the area, and the appropriate scale of these activities.

3.4 Objectives of the Freight Strategy

The Central Bedfordshire Freight Strategy is guided by a series of objectives. These have been informed by key principals of the preceding national and local policy taking account of challenges and aspirations for Central Bedfordshire, and are set out in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Objectives of the Central Bedfordshire Freight Strategy

No.	Objectives
A	Minimise the negative impacts on local communities and the environment from freight traffic and operations
B	Encourage the movement of freight by means other than road haulage where appropriate and feasible
C	Enable the efficient and reliable transport of freight to support the Authority's ambition to make Central Bedfordshire an economic powerhouse



4. Managing Freight on Roads

4.1 Context

Most of the freight moved in Central Bedfordshire is carried by road. Typically, more than 95% of freight gets moved by lorries or vans. This strategy aims to decrease the proportion of freight moved by road, however the Authority recognises that motorised vehicles will continue to be the primary means by which goods are transported through Central Bedfordshire in the foreseeable future. Therefore, it is important to develop policies to manage freight traffic as it moves within Central Bedfordshire to ensure that the objectives of the Freight Strategy can be met.

Major Freight Routes in Central Bedfordshire

In peak periods the M1 carries up to 700 lorries⁵ an hour and a maximum of 9,250 freight vehicles daily. In total around 15% of all vehicles on the M1 in Central Bedfordshire are lorries⁶. There are close to 200 lorries on the A1 during peak periods or around 2,000 per day, representing approximately 10% of all vehicles on the A1, whilst other routes carrying significant freight traffic include:

- A5 through Dunstable between the A505 (in Thornton) and A505/B489, which lies within a dedicated Air Quality Management Area.
- A6 which runs through the centre of the unitary providing links to Luton and Bedford;
- A603 between Bedford and the A1, immediately east of Sandy.

Whilst the A507 is the only east west link on the designated network it carries considerably less freight traffic, some 55 to 60% of HGV traffic of the A5, A6 and A603. Approximately 5% of all traffic on the A507 is freight vehicles.

One of the simplest means for encouraging goods vehicles to adhere to suitable routes is to provide a co-ordinated network of appropriate routes. Fortunately, in and around Central Bedfordshire, the highway network is relatively well able to cater for the needs of the freight industry and there are a number of improvement schemes that have already been implemented, or will be in the near future to address congestion issues in Central Bedfordshire.

⁵ Freight vehicles or lorries are those greater than 6.6metres in length (OGV1 and OGV2).

⁶ Data on M1 and A1 traffic flows is from the Highways Agency for the year 2008. Count data for M1 covers Junctions 11 to 14. Traffic sensors for the southern sections of the motorway had been disabled during the count period, when significant road works were taking place.



Table 4.1 following provides details of proposed road schemes that will improve road freight access and journey time reliability in Central Bedfordshire.

Table 4.1: Proposed Road Schemes

Scheme	Description	Promoter
A5 – M1 Link Road	4.6km, two-lane dual carriageway running east from the A5 north of Dunstable to join the M1 at a new Junction 11a south of Charlton. Delivery of this scheme will be dependent on availability of central government funding.	Highways Agency
Woodside Connection	Connection between the new M1 Junction 11a and the local road network in Woodside is promoted in the South Bedfordshire and Luton Core Strategy. Delivery of this scheme will be dependent on availability of central government funding.	Central Bedfordshire and Luton Councils
Luton Northern Bypass	Proposed new link between the Junction 11a of the M1 and the A6 and, with approval of Hertfordshire County Council, the A505. The required funding is unlikely to be available in the short to medium term. Delivery of this scheme will be dependent on availability of central government funding.	Luton Council Central Bedfordshire Council
A421 M1 to Milton Keynes	Dualling of the A421 west of from M1 Junction 13 to Milton Keynes which will complement the above scheme.	Milton Keynes Council and Central Bedfordshire Council
M1 junction 10-13 improvements	Road widening initiative which is scheduled for completion 2013.	Highways Agency

A Central Bedfordshire designated road freight network (DRFN), illustrated in Figure 4.1, has been developed to provide links between key freight generators and attractors within the area whilst minimising impacts on local communities. It is comprised of:

- **Primary routes:** Run through the unitary providing access to major destinations of regional and national significance.
- **Secondary routes:** Link identified freight generators and destinations to the primary route network and restrict lorries to roads where a minimum of environmental and infrastructure damage will occur.

It is intended that freight vehicles travel only on these roads, avoiding town centres as feasible, unless servicing local communities and moving to generators or destinations not on the designated network.

The DRFN is supported by a series of signed weight, height and width restrictions zones across Central Bedfordshire that limit freight movements. These are depicted at Figure 4.2 and Figure 4.3.



There are two types of restrictions in force in Central Bedfordshire. Under the first, large vehicles (over 7.5 tonnes) may not enter many towns and villages unless making a delivery or pick up. The second type of restrictions relates to constraints on the road network such as narrow road widths or low height bridges.

4.2 Issues

Whilst the Authority has put in place a comprehensive system of road freight management measures to ensure vehicles utilise the most appropriate roads it will only be effective if observed by drivers, enforced and remains fit for purpose as Central Bedfordshire grows. Therefore, it is important that local industry is made aware of the Authority's approach to road freight management through road signs, communications campaigns for example⁷.

Monitoring initiatives such as automatic number plate recognition are required to ensure drivers adhere to designated roads and where this is not the case the Authority will need to consider enforcement. Unlike parking regulations, restrictions on the movement of vehicles (including those relating to height and weight) are not decriminalised outside of London.

The Authority must engage local police to enforce them and it done so previously to support the Leighton-Linslade lorry ban. Whilst this approach can be costly, it will be used if other measures to contain freight traffic to appropriate roads in Central Bedfordshire have proved ineffective.

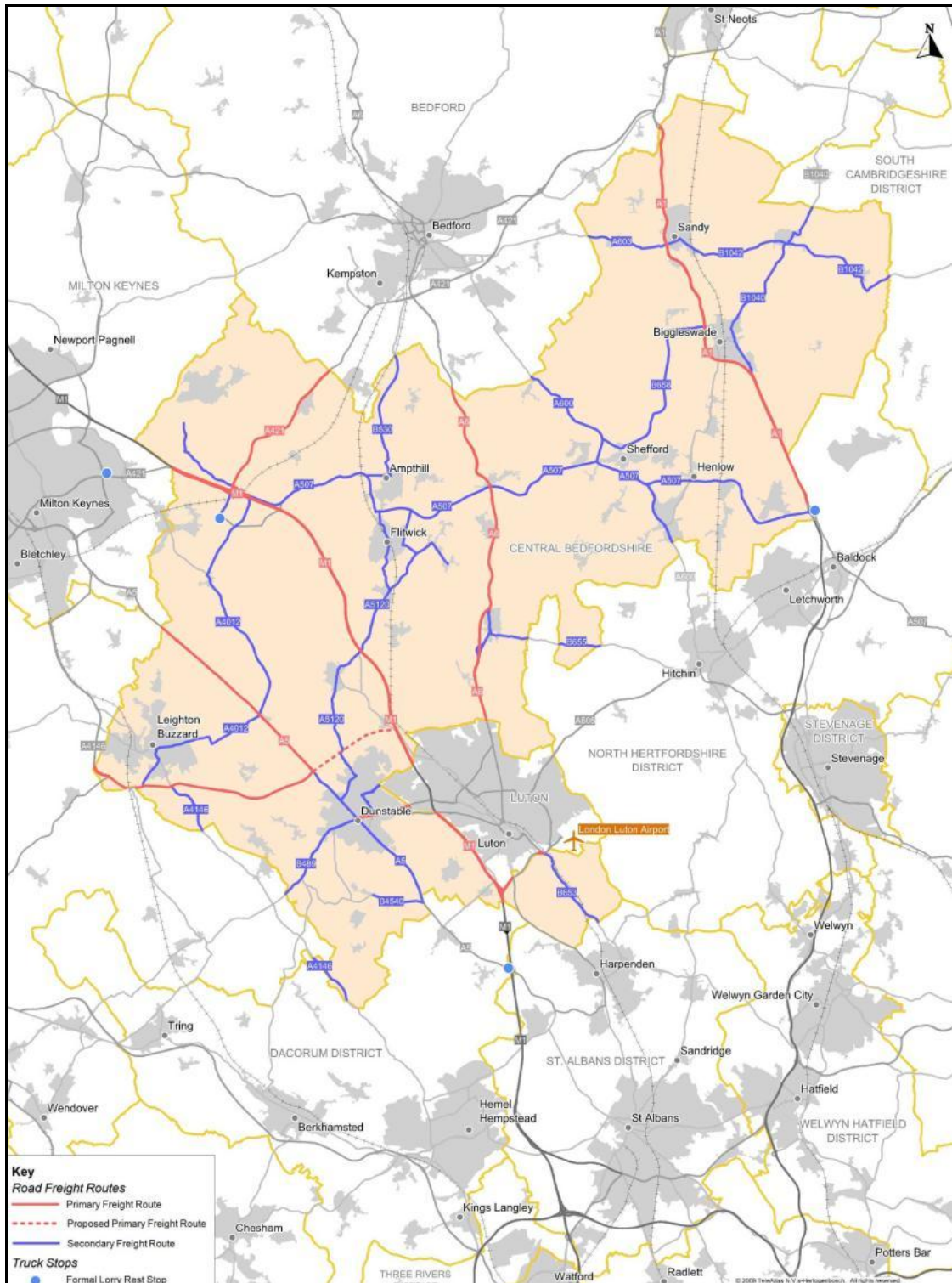
Regular review and, as necessary, amendments to the DRFN and vehicular movement restrictions (depicted at Figures 4.1 and Figure 4.2) will ensure they remains fit for purpose as the needs of Central Bedfordshire's community and industry changes overtime. This may include establishing temporary diversionary routes during road works, traffic incidents or to facilitate movement of construction related traffic.

Proactive management of the land use planning system provides the Authority with an opportunity to ensure any freight activities associated with new development do not unnecessarily impede upon the community.

⁷ Further detail on Council's approach to information provision is provided at Chapter 7.



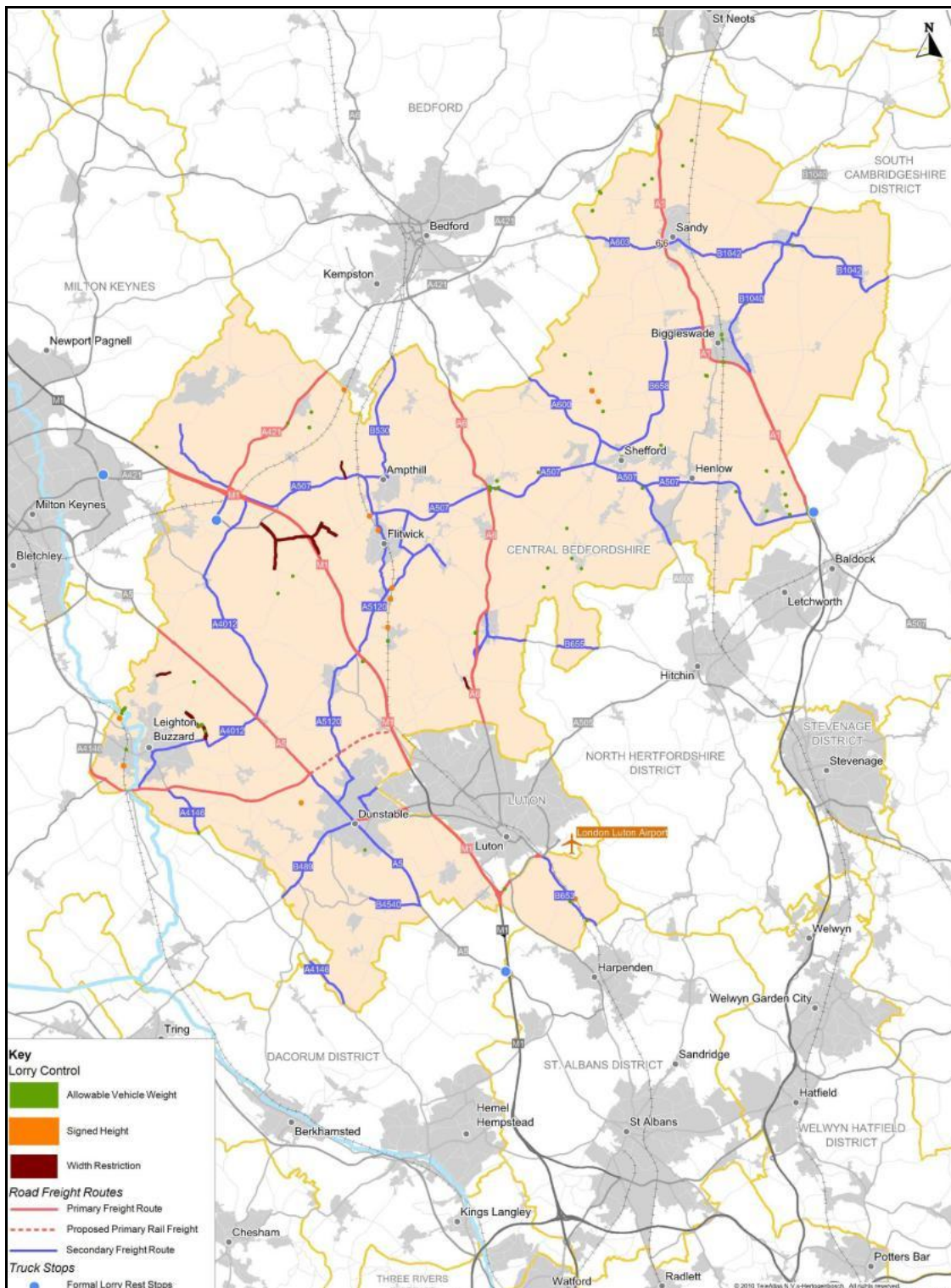
Figure 4.1: Designated Road Freight Net work



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Figure 4.2: Freight Access Bans



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As the planning authority, the Council may exert influence over the location of new developments promoting sites with good access to DRFN primary routes as preferred locations for new warehousing and other freight generating land uses.

The Authority will require that development proposals sufficiently mitigate any forecast freight impacts on local communities and environment and utilise freight movement controls and developer contributions (Section 106 and Section 278 Agreements) to achieve these aims.

Controls can include limits over the number of lorries accessing a site, allowable access routes and limits on the times at which freight vehicles may access the site both during the construction and operation phases.

Private sector funding linked to new developments can be secured to enhance the road network and freight facilities addressing any freight growth associated with development.

4.3 Environmental Assessment

The key environmental issues relating to the movement of freight by road in Central Bedfordshire are:

- **Carbon dioxide emissions:** the contribution of freight traffic to overall levels of emissions from vehicle exhausts;
- **Air pollution:** through elevated concentrations of pollutants such as carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen and particulate matter due to emissions from exhausts of vans and lorries. This can affect the health of people living near busy freight routes, and affect ecological habitats;
- **Noise and vibration:** Disturbance to people living near the main freight routes or freight facilities from the movement of vans and lorries;
- **Other physical effects of freight traffic:** The passage of lorries can affect ecological habitats or historic/heritage resources close to the main freight routes, either directly or due to noise and vibration.

There is no evidence presently that freight traffic disproportionately contributes to environmental problems in Central Bedfordshire. However, the congestion hot spot at the A5 - A505 junction in Dunstable is covered by an Air Quality Management Area. In this zone nitrous oxide (NO₂), primarily arising from traffic, has been recorded above the Government's objective level of 30 µg/m³.

An Air Quality Action Plan is in development and will include a number of measures designed to decrease nitrous oxide levels. These could include temporary or daytime lorry or other vehicular bans. Careful management of the DRFN will be required to identify alternatives for these for the two important primary routes which (have potential to) carry a significant amount of freight through traffic and accommodate traffic diverted from the M1 in accident conditions.

When considering imposition of vehicle bans, the Authority will take account of the additional costs to businesses and environmental impacts resulting from lorries taking longer, less direct journeys.



The Authority has identified potential air quality problems relating to Bedford Street and Dunstable Street in Ampthill. These are two new narrow congested streets where a traffic flow of over 5,000 vehicles per day is common. The Authority will review air quality in these areas which will lead to the designation of further AQMAs if appropriate.

In developing a more formal approach to the management of freight traffic, particularly in terms of the use of designated freight routes, it will be possible to both ensure the more efficient flow of freight vehicles and to offer greater protection to the more environmentally-sensitive parts of the Central Bedfordshire, so that these potential environmental effects can be minimised.

The Authority will also work with other agencies as appropriate, including the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency, to ensure that all the relevant environmental regulations placed on freight operators in terms of the performance and maintenance of vehicles are properly and vigorously enforced.

4.4 Policies

To manage freight on roads the Authority will:

- Maintain a Designated Road Freight Network (DRFN) of primary and secondary routes, in order to protect the safety of other road users, the amenity of communities and their local environments, and the integrity of highway infrastructure. In managing this route the Authority will identify diversionary routes during road works and traffic incidents.
- Continue to utilise traffic management techniques (weight and height restrictions, traffic calming etc) to ensure most road freight uses the DRFN.
- Commit resources to support the police in enforcement of the DRFN and restrictions on freight traffic where other measures to contain freight to designated routes has proved ineffective. Key areas of concern will be areas close to key generators and attractors of freight traffic and where local residents are particularly vulnerable to its effects.
- Work with the police and with operators through the Regional Freight Quality Partnership to develop positive and innovative approaches to enforcement that can be delivered at lower cost, such as requiring compulsory attendance at awareness training for drivers identified as breaking speed limits or travelling off designated routes as an alternative to prosecution.
- Support the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency and other relevant bodies in their role to enforce operator and driver compliance with applicable environmental standards. (e.g. regarding vehicle emissions of air pollutants and noise).
- Use the land use planning system and development control process to actively manage the impacts of construction and distribution freight on the local community and environment. Proposals for activities that generate large volumes of freight will not be permitted if lorry routes and facilities servicing the site are deemed insufficient.



4.5 Specific Proposals

The Authority will undertake the following initiatives to support achievement of the above policies:

- Review designation of roads in Central Bedfordshire as either primary or secondary freight routes or non freight routes. This will take into account:
 - Road classification. Only 'A' roads may be classified as primary routes. 'B' roads of sufficient width and quality may be suitable secondary freight routes;
 - Existing traffic management measures such as height and weight restrictions;
 - The need to provide access to major freight attractors and generators; and
 - Proximity to schools and other sensitive community uses along the route.
- Reviewing the weight, height, vehicle emissions standards and other freight management measures in place across Central Bedfordshire ensuring there is a consistent and systematic approach to their development and application.
- Periodically reviewing the DRFN and freight restrictions to ensure that they:
 - Continue to meet present needs of local businesses and local communities,
 - Are adequately publicised to the industry,
 - Are used by freight traffic in preference to local roads; and
 - Take account of freight and other road traffic management practices adopted by neighbouring authorities and the Highways Agency, as appropriate.
- Assessing the advantages to Central Bedfordshire of decriminalising freight vehicle traffic regulations and inform central government of the Authority's findings. Civilian enforcement could provide the Authority with greater opportunity to proactively apply height, weight and similar restrictions.
- Securing construction travel plans developed as part of transport assessments for all new major development proposals. Construction travel plans will apply to the design of buildings and also to delivery operations during the construction phase. Where appropriate these plans will align with the travel plan developed for the site.
- Utilising the planning system to ensure developments forecast to generate significant freight movements are focussed within existing industrial areas and in the expansion sites close to the existing strategic network such as the potential new Junction 11a.
- Imposing planning conditions and obligations (including the leverage of developer contributions) to deliver initiatives that support achievement of the strategy. This includes controls over the number of lorries accessing a site, access routes and hours of operation.



5. Freight Facilities

5.1 Context

The provision of rest and parking facilities is important to maximise highway safety and to support European Union regulation (EC 561/2006) which governs the working hours and rest periods of drivers of large vehicles (over 3.5 tonnes).

Such facilities should provide adequate rest areas for drivers and allow for the safe parking of large vehicles whilst minimising impacts on other road users, in accordance with guidelines established under the European Union's European Truck Parking Operational Services (SETPOS) and LABEL initiatives.

Within Central Bedfordshire and neighbouring authorities there are a small number of formal rest stops providing facilities for freight drivers including food retailers and showers. Vehicles may be parked onsite for a fee. No rest site within immediate proximity of Central Bedfordshire has lodging facilities for drivers. Formal rest stops in and near Central Bedfordshire include:

- Truckstop Café (Crawley Crossing Bunker Stop) near Junction 13 of the M1;
- Baldock Services at the A1 / A507 junction (Hertfordshire);
- Watling Street Café on the A5 south of Dunstable (Hertfordshire); and
- MK Lorry Park by M1 Junctions 13 & 14 (Milton Keynes).

These formal rest stops are depicted in both Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2. Informal stops include other services stations, such as the Little Brickhill Service station on the A5 (Milton Keynes), and lay-bys and disused road alignments along the DRFN. Temporary food vans are located in some lay-bys to cater for both freight drivers and other road users.

5.2 Issues

On any day of the week there are a number of freight vehicles parked along Central Bedfordshire's roads and frequently drivers divert from major routes such as the M1 to access available rest stops on trunk roads.

Whilst safe driving practices necessitate some lorry parking in lay-bys, they are not well suited for extensive use, such as overnight stops. Drivers should ideally use formal stops when available. Safety is a concern particularly where vehicles cannot be accommodated within the curtilage of the highway, or prevent non freight vehicles from stopping.

Reasons why drivers park in lay-bys may include poor knowledge about the location of existing formal facilities, a lack of available parking bays at established lorry stops or the fact that drivers may be waiting for pick up or delivery.

The Authority's primary approach to the management of freight facilities will be to promote existing formal lorry parks and designate select lay-bys along DRFN primary routes as suitable for temporary lorry parking through:



- Establishing a licensing regime allowing catering vans to operate only at these locations;
- Providing facilities for lorry drivers such as information boards and toilets in approved bays;
- Through signage and other distinguishing features making clear to drivers which lay-bys have been identified by the Authority as suitable for lorry parking and which are not.

The Authority may receive planning applications for establishment of new formal lorry parks within Central Bedfordshire and / or expansions to existing facilities. In considering such proposals impacts on local residents and other road users will be a primary consideration.

When reviewing planning applications from private interests, the Authority will also take account of the Department for Transport's Strategy for Lorry Parking Provision in England (2009) which seeks to map the need for parking sites across the authority area to 2019 and beyond, increase awareness of existing facilities and prepare best practice guidance governing their establishment and usage⁸.

The Authority is likely to support establishment of formal lorry parks in neighbouring local authority areas, subject to industry demand, community needs and anticipated environmental impacts.

5.3 Environmental Assessment

Where there is unmanaged use of lay-bys for parking by lorries, the visual impact of parked vehicles, possible noise disturbance caused by lorries arriving / leaving and litter and health issues arising from a lack of formal facilities may be a cause of concern for residents living nearby. However, in general, those locations that are most prone to use in this way tend to be some way from residential areas, and there is little evidence that this is a particular problem for local residents as a consequence.

The proper licensing of any facilities within lay-bys will be key to managing any issues arising from this activity, and due account will be taken of the effects on local people.

One important consideration in the provision of new facilities for freight traffic will be to ensure that the take-up of emerging technologies aimed at reducing the environmental effects of freight traffic are properly supported. For example, it will be a requirement that, where appropriate, new facilities include supply and delivery infrastructure for less polluting fuels (such as biodiesel, liquefied petroleum gas or electricity).

5.4 Policies

To manage the effective use of freight facilities in Central Bedfordshire, the Authority will:

- Ensure provision of lorry parking and driver facilities to facilitate safe freight operations and minimise any adverse impacts upon the local community and environment; and
- Ensure sufficient land is provided for the anticipated freight facilities associated with new developments including construction traffic.

⁸ This guidance will build on initiatives such as the European Union's European Truck Parking Operational Services (SETPOS) initiative and LABEL.



5.5 Specific Proposals

The Authority will undertake the following initiatives to support achievement of the above policies:

- Designate and promote selected lay-bys along the DRFN primary roads as suitable for short stops by freight traffic in line with DfT policy circular 01/2008 'Policy on Service Areas and Road Side Facilities on Motorways and All-purpose Trunk Roads in England'. These will be chosen on the basis of their suitability in terms of safety and amenity. Catering and similar businesses providing services for drivers will only be licensed to operate at designated lay-bys;
- Facilitate establishment of formal freight stops in appropriate locations within Central Bedfordshire, particularly within the north of the local authority area. The Authority will favourably view proposals from the private sector for formal parking facilities in appropriate locations that seek to minimise any potential impacts on local community and the environment. The Authority will also seek funding through developer contributions to providing supporting finance for development of truck stops.
- Work with neighbouring authorities to ensure any lorry parks proposed within their boundaries benefit the management of freight in Central Bedfordshire; and
- Require all new industrial and commercial units to cater for anticipated lorry parking requirements on site.



6. Servicing and Deliveries

6.1 Issues

Delivery traffic can be an issue of concern to Central Bedfordshire residents. Roads through many of its historic market towns are of insufficient width to accommodate large freight vehicles. Servicing and delivery can contribute to already congested conditions, vehicular noise and pollution. Poorly parked vehicles may inhibit access for local residents and can be a safety hazard.

Planned growth for Central Bedfordshire will see significant development focussed on the edge of the local authority area's major settlements. The import of large volumes of construction materials to these areas will exacerbate issues regarding freight deliveries unless carefully managed.

Opportunities to manage servicing and deliveries include restrictions or voluntary agreements regarding the times at which deliveries may occur and the use of smaller and more environmentally sound vehicles. In some locations, for example, it may be desirable to encourage delivery outside of core shopping hours to improve amenity for pedestrians, although this may be disruptive for local residents, and may cause delays if deliveries coincide with peak times for journeys to or from work.

In places where peak congestion is a concern deliveries could be restricted to non-peak times, although this may not be as convenient for businesses. As with all freight management measures, compliance costs for freight operators, which may be passed onto consumers, is a key consideration.

For new developments of above a specified size⁹, the Authority requires the development of travel plans, typically as a condition of planning consent. Travel plans set out how the development's promoter and occupier will manage travel to the site with a particular focus on reducing the number of vehicle trips. Whilst travel plans have traditionally focussed on commuting trips they increasingly consider all trips generated by a development including deliveries and servicing.

Travel plans incorporating deliveries and servicing, aim to reduce the volume and impacts of freight activity associated with operation of the site (particularly during peak periods) using a range of approaches including consolidation, out-of-hours delivery, proscribing loading locations and minimum vehicle emission standards.

Plans can be implemented through contractual relationships between site operators and their supply chain. Effective travel plans are monitored to assess effectiveness and updated as the travel conditions change.

Through the planning system the Authority can also require that new developments include good quality loading facilities on-site, such as waiting bays, and are orientated to facilitate efficient access and egress of delivery vehicles.

⁹ Council's thresholds for development of a travel plan differ according to the type of development and calculated by gross floor area.



Consolidation centres for deliveries and construction materials

Consolidation centres can be an effective way of addressing the environmental impacts of freight such as congestion, noise and pollution of deliveries. Goods are transported in large volume to central warehousing frequently on the edge of large settlements. They are thereafter broken down and distributed by smaller vehicles to stores and other end users. As these vehicles carry full loads to a common destination the total number of lorries both big and small travelling through town and villages is reduced.

By enabling more efficient and less intrusive transport operations within urban areas consolidation centres can potentially deliver both environmental and social benefits. They have potential to facilitate better logistics planning, better inventory control and product availability. Consolidation centres can be established to cater for both the retail sector and for construction sites.

There are a number of barriers to establishment of consolidation centres and only a limited number of successful centres across the European Union, none of which are self financing. Set-up and operating costs are in most cases prohibitively high and public funding has been required to establish centres currently operating in the UK and elsewhere in the European Union.

Suitable large sites with provision for freight vehicles and warehousing must be identified and planning permissions secured.

Diverting from normal routes may add to delivery costs. Competitors may not be willing to cooperate and coordinate delivery arrangements.

Consolidation centres must handle a significant volume of deliveries to be viable and are unlikely to be feasible for most settlements in Central Bedfordshire.

However the Authority notes findings from a DfT commissioned report that consolidation centres are likely to be most suitable for major construction sites and large retail or commercial developments. It will keep a watching brief on their potential value in managing freight flows in Central Bedfordshire as the unitary's larger conurbations grow and major development sites come online.

Source: Urban Freight Consolidation Centres Transport Studies Group, University of Westminster for the Department for Transport (2 November 2005) (<http://www.dft.gov.uk/rmd/project.asp?intProjectID=12079>)

6.2 Environmental Assessment

As noted above, lorries entering or leaving commercial premises, or loading/unloading at the roadside can exacerbate noise and air pollution problems in urban areas. The measures set out in this strategy will seek to minimise these, and environmental concerns will be a key element in the identification, designation and enforcement of management measures developed on the basis of the strategy.

Planning permission for new commercial premises will not be granted unless proper arrangements have been made for access and deliveries, preferably within the curtilage of the site. The possible effects of service access on local residents will also be a key consideration in determining planning applications.



6.3 Policies

To provide for effective servicing and deliveries in Central Bedfordshire, the Authority will:

- Seek to ensure that there are adequate arrangements for deliveries to and servicing of business in the towns within Central Bedfordshire, taking account of the local amenity and community.
- Ensure servicing and deliveries are adequately provided for in new developments.
- Examine the need to support development of consolidation centres for construction materials, spoil waste for removal and / or other bulk goods in Central Bedfordshire and neighbouring local authority areas.

6.4 Specific Proposals

The Authority should consider undertaking the following initiatives to support achievement of the above policies.

- Reviewing freight vehicle restrictions in town centres (regarding the timing of deliveries, weight restrictions, vehicle emissions standards etc) with a specific focus on current and future needs of existing businesses. The review will take account of the following criteria:
 - Road width and condition;
 - Proximity of routes to the DRFN;
 - Recorded accidents along considered routes;
 - Resident complaints about freight activity along considered routes; and
 - The location of destinations such as retail stores.
- Ensuring delivery and servicing is addressed in travel plans prepared for all new major development proposals. The plans will be enforced through use of planning conditions or obligations. The Authority will also encourage organisations developing voluntary travel plans to address servicing and deliveries. Any restrictions on delivery times should take account of local traffic conditions, the requirements of businesses and the concerns of local residents.
- Keeping a watching brief on opportunities to promote construction consolidation centres within Central Bedfordshire and surrounds as additional housing and employment sites are brought on line.



7. Communicating Freight Management Measures

7.1 Context

The provision of accurate and up to date information to the freight industry, community and the neighbouring authorities will underpin the success of the strategy.

Road signs are erected throughout Central Bedfordshire to inform drivers on the road of upcoming weight and height restrictions. As yet there has been limited publicity to industry regarding the designated route network. Freight drivers and operators must also be informed of other freight management measures proposed for implementation as part of this strategy, such as proposed restrictions on lay-by parking.

Importantly such communications must be two way. The views of freight drivers and operators, freight industry bodies, commercial operators and also residents will help inform the Authority of the most appropriate means to achieving objectives of this strategy.

Central Bedfordshire is member of the Regional Freight Quality Partnership, a forum that which facilitates dialogue between neighbouring authorities about freight issues. The Authority is seeking to expand membership and influence of this group such that it may become a key vehicle to engage with stakeholders and ensure a cohesive and coordinated approach to manage all modes of freight across the region.

Freight Quality Partnerships

Freight Quality Partnerships (FQPs) provide a forum for local authorities, industry including Freight Transport Association, Road Haulage Association and individual operators, and other stakeholders to work together to address specific freight problems.

These partnerships are an efficient and effective means for local authorities to consult on development and implementation of specific initiatives outlined in this strategy such as the signage strategy and the DRFN. As such FQPs provide a more comprehensive and innovative solutions than could be produced by any one partner on their own and can help generate buy-in to freight management practices.

They can be used to disseminate information about such practices and promote best practice. Maintaining a broad membership and the interest of members is key to the success and effectiveness of a partnership. Actions plans and terms of reference that set out the specific initiatives the partnership will undertake can help maintain momentum.

Central Bedfordshire is an active member of the East of England FQP and will use this forum to engage with neighbouring authorities and freight industry bodies regarding implementation of this strategy and other freight issues of importance across the region.



7.2 Issues

Freight management measures and facilities such as DRFN, lorry restrictions and provision of lorry parking facilities will only be effective if well understood by freight operators, drivers and businesses utilising freight.

Roadside signs are currently used across Central Bedfordshire indicating weight and other restrictions. Other methods of information provision include poster boards erected at truckstops alerting drivers to restrictions and facilities in the area, satellite navigation, variable messaging signs on major routes and web based resources.

Notably the time and mode of delivery of information is critical. Not all drivers will have access to the internet or satellite navigation systems. Signs must be placed so as to provide sufficient warning of upcoming freight restrictions allowing drivers to adhere to and remain on the designated network. Images may be the most effective method of getting a clear message across.

Freight operators work not only in Central Bedfordshire but across the region. As such the Authority's approach to management of freight should be consistent, as practicable, with those adopted by other agencies, including local authorities and the Highways Agency. On-going engagement with these bodies and also with the freight industry, through Authority's business engagement programme and other means, can be used to ensure freight management measures are appropriate and well publicised.

Central Government runs a number of initiatives designed to improve the efficiency, safety and environmental performance of the freight industry. These include the Safe and Fuel Efficient Driving (SAFED) driver development, the Freight Best Practice and Fleet Advice programme, and also freight facility grants which support businesses in changing mode from road to rail or water. The European Union similarly runs grant programmes, such as Marco Polo, for businesses that operate across member states. It would benefit Central Bedfordshire if more operators accessed available funding and support.

7.3 Environmental Issues

Providing useful information for drivers is an important tool in helping to minimise the environmental impacts from freight traffic, and indicated in Paragraphs 0 to 0. Encouraging drivers to use the most appropriate routes, smoothing freight traffic flows and keeping vans and lorries away from the most environmentally-sensitive areas will help minimise the adverse effects of freight movement.

7.4 Policies

To disseminate information about freight management measures in Central Bedfordshire and foster an effective working relationship between government agencies and industry, the Authority will:



- Provide appropriate and accessible information alerting freight drivers and operators to freight management measures in place in Central Bedfordshire and facilities for freight drivers in the area.
- Encourage safer and more fuel efficient driving and the use of more fuel efficient practices (e.g. loading bay pre-booking and computerised vehicle routing and scheduling). In doing so the Authority will take account of vehicle emissions standards restrictions in place within Central Bedfordshire.
- Work with regional and sub regional partners to promote the development of the logistics sector, to support sustainable job creation high value added activities within the logistics sector.
- Pro-actively engage with the freight industry (including key freight generators and attractors) and neighbouring authorities to assist with delivery of the policies of this strategy.

7.5 Specific Proposals

The Authority will undertake the following initiatives to support achievement of the above policies.

- Developing a signage strategy to publicise the DRFN, freight restrictions and provision of lorry parking facilities. The strategy will provide a consistent approach to the location, visual appearance and maintenance of signs. It will consider placement of information boards at rest stops and lay-bys and use of variable message signs. It will take account of the need to minimise English language instructions.
- Preparing and distributing information explaining the freight management measures in Central Bedfordshire through a variety of channels including via industry bodies, local freight generators and attractors and to satellite navigation companies via their trading associations and through the Authority's website. The use of English language instructions will be minimised where appropriate.
- Working closely with neighbouring authorities and seek to develop a consistent approach to freight management. The following will be considered:
 - Opportunities to develop a common approach to signage;
 - Application of restrictions and bans;
 - The designation of preferred freight routes and possible establishment of a sub-regional or regional Strategic Freight Network; and
 - Citing of interchange facilities, consolidation centres and lorry parks; and
 - Working with industry to develop and communicate the above.
- Enhancing the role of the Regional Freight Quality Partnership as a means to engage with the freight industry including industry bodies (Road Haulage Association and Freight Transport Association), freight operators, major freight generators and attractors, the Highways Agency, and Strategic Rail Authority.
- Ensuring new businesses locating to Central Bedfordshire are aware of Department for Transport's freight programmes that promote and enable more environmentally and socially sound freight practice. This will be done primarily through the Authority's existing economic development activities.



8. Non-Road Modes

8.1 Context

Encouraging the transport of a greater proportion of freight by modes other than road based vehicles is a key objective of this strategy.

Central Bedfordshire is well served by rail, and to a lesser extent air and pipeline freight networks and facilities. Water borne freight is not considered to be a realistic alternative for the transportation of goods within the authority and so has been discounted from the Strategy. Measures to support industry to make greater use of existing infrastructure will go some way to achieving the Authority's sustainable distribution aspirations.

Facility improvements that curb the projected growth in freight vehicles on Central Bedfordshire's roads should be similarly beneficial.

Rail Freight Routes¹⁰

There are three principal routes in Central Bedfordshire which are critical to national rail freight operations and result in a large volume of rail freight moving through the area.

- The West Coast Main Line (WCML) runs from London Euston through to the West Midlands, North Wales, and Scotland. A short section of the route passes through Central Bedfordshire at Leighton Buzzard;
- The Midland Main Line (MML) links London St Pancras with Luton, Bedford, Derby, Nottingham, Sheffield and the North. It passes through the centre of Central Bedfordshire including the towns of Harlington and Flitwick. The MML has recently had an upgrade with the reinstatement of a third track in the Wellingborough area;
- The East Coast Main Line (ECML) links London Kings Cross with Peterborough, the North East and Scotland. The route passes through Central Bedfordshire between Biggleswade and Sandy. It includes the freight services at Plasmor Brick Terminal.

The Marston Vale line, a local service, runs between Bedford and Bletchley.

Central Government has identified a range of initiatives to increase the capacity along all the strategic rail lines and support the continued growth in rail freight. These may include changes to rail infrastructure along the Midland Mainline in Central Bedfordshire. Capacity improvements should attract long haul freight from strategic routes through the area, notably the M1 and A1.

¹⁰ All data, unless otherwise specified is from Network Rail's Route Utilisation Strategies (RUS) that cover the area (MML, ECML, WCML and Freight RUS). RUS are the key railway planning documents and highlights the anticipated future demand that will be placed on the rail network, identifies gaps between the future demand and current capability and consider options to address these gaps.



A new orbital rail route is in development to link the Felixstowe and Harwich ports with Cambridge, Bedford, Milton Keynes and Oxford and provide connections to the Great Eastern, East Coast, Midland, West Coast and Great Western main lines. This initiative is being promoted by the East West Rail Consortium of which Central Bedfordshire Authority is a member.

Between Bedford and Milton Keynes and onto Oxford the new service will run along the local Marston Vale line which cuts through the north of Central Bedfordshire. The route's alignment east of Bedford to Cambridge (known as the 'missing link') has not been confirmed. The East West Rail Consortium continues to seek a suitable alignment and is currently considering two routes¹¹:

- A central route that would run east or south-east from Bedford to the ECML at Sandy or Hitchin; and
- A southern route providing a relatively short link to the Midland Mainline at Stewartby (south of Bedford) and then southwards to Luton and then to Cambridge and/or Stansted airport via the ECML at Stevenage.

Once complete the east-west rail link would provide a rail alternative to freight travelling between the ports and growth areas of the East of England and, with development of appropriate connections, to the north and south. It will provide a viable alternative to long distance road haulage as the route will be fully gauge cleared.

Freight Terminals

There are a number of rail freight interchange facilities in and near Central Bedfordshire which see goods transferred from rail to road. These include including:

- **The Plasmor Brick Terminal at Biggleswade:** Receives a range of construction material by rail for onward road distribution around the south east. Only three trains per week serve the terminal;
- **Forders sidings at Stewartby** on the Marston Vale line handles waste traffic and infrastructure maintenance trains as required;
- **Elstow, Bedford and Luton interchanges** on the MML, which mostly handle construction material; and
- **Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal (DIRFT):** which although located around 50 miles away in Northamptonshire, is a strategically important multi modal freight terminal, with the potential to move containerised freight to and from Central Bedfordshire via road connections.

¹¹ East West Rail Central Section - Operating Case Discussion Paper Steer Davies Gleave (2009)



Interchange Proposals

Government policy identifies the need for three to four new strategic rail freight interchanges (SRFIs)¹² to serve London, the South East and the East of England¹³.

There are a number of sites that have been promoted as SRFI locations that if developed would see road and rail freight movements within Central Bedfordshire increase.

In particular, Helioslough Ltd is seeking to establish a new strategic rail freight interchange facility (SRFI) at the former Radlett Airfield in Hertfordshire, south of St Albans¹⁴. The planning application was reviewed at a public inquiry which was held in late 2009. On 7th July 2010, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced that planning permission was refused for this proposal. Helioslough's challenge to the legality of that particular decision is due to be heard in the High Court over a 3-day period commencing on 28th June 2011.

A significantly smaller site (40 ha.), to the north of Luton, near Sundon, between the former quarry and the Midland Main Line, has been identified in the Luton and Southern Bedfordshire Core Strategy Pre-Submission (November 2010) as a suitable location for a (non-strategic) rail freight interchange.

This is supported in Policy CS9 – Delivering Economic Prosperity where the site “will be considered for allocation through the site allocations policies for a Rail Freight Interchange” and “no development will be permitted in this location for uses other than a Rail Freight Interchange, and rail-served warehouses.” Paragraph 3.34 of the Core Strategy sets out the rationale for the site's identification and safeguarding in this way.

The Sundon Rail Freight Interchange is located by the Luton / Dunstable expansion area, a key residential and employment growth site for Central Bedfordshire. The Rail Freight Interchange would mainly serve the local area, and complement the roles of the SRFI's in serving a wider area. It is intended for the Rail Freight Interchange to be delivered following the completion of M1 Junction 11A. It is intended for the RFI to be connected directly to the proposed Luton Northern Bypass (para. 3.34), with the intention of minimising adverse impacts on the existing local road network.

Pipelines

The UK pipelines network transports a range of commodities including natural and liquid gas, water, sewage and oil based product. Pipelines are effective at moving a volume of goods economically and safely over a fixed route with little environmental impact including minimum use of energy. Like canals, pipelines are best suited to carriage of non-time critical freight.

¹² An SRFI is a major interchange with significant intermodal and warehousing located at nationally strategic sites (of 100 to 400 ha) proximate to major conurbations. SRFI's requires high quality links to motorway and trunk road. (Strategic Rail Freight Interchange Policy March 2004 Strategic Rail Authority)

¹³ Strategic Rail Freight Interchange Policy Strategic Rail Authority (2004). Aspects of this document are still used by DfT as a basis of advice and guidance.

¹⁴ The Need Case For A Strategic Rail Freight Interchange Technical Report 6: Consideration Of Alternative Sites Helioslough Ltd (2009)



An outlet of the UK pipelines network is located at Sandy. Storing more than 25,000 tonnes of hazardous material, this site is Central Bedfordshire's only top-tier Control of Major Accidents and Hazards site¹⁵. The facility generates a significant volume of HGV movements including road tankers transporting oils and gases.

Air Freight¹⁶

A small amount of freight is currently moved by air from nearby London Luton Airport. In 2008 the airport handled 40,000 tonnes freight (3,300 cargo movements), 1.8% of all UK airfreight volume. There are currently no plans for any significant increase in movements of air freight to or from Luton Airport¹⁷.

8.2 Issues

Due to its location on the strategic road network, much long haul freight neither originating in or destined for Central Bedfordshire is transported through the area (see Chapter 4) along strategic roads such as the A1 and M1, contributing to congestion on the network. Rail in particular has potential to provide a viable alternative to longer haul road based transport as a more environmentally and socially sustainable mode. As such the Authority supports proposed capacity improvements to mainline rail lines that provide additional capacity for passenger and freight trains.

Whilst the east-west rail link is proposed to act primarily as a passenger service, opportunities to exploit the new link as a freight route will be similarly advantageous to the Authority's sustainable freight aspirations.

Regarding establishment of new rail freight interchanges, the Authority considers that sites close to the key hubs of London and the ports with good access to the strategic rail and road network are likely to be most appropriate for strategic interchanges. As part of the Luton and Southern Bedfordshire Core Strategy, land adjacent to the former Sundon Quarry has been identified as suitable for a smaller (40 ha.) rail freight interchange.

Regardless of location, any proposal for establishing interchange facilities in or affecting Central Bedfordshire will be considered in light of national planning and transport guidance (such as PPG13), the needs of business and likely impacts on the community and environment.

Development of rail freight interchanges in or affecting Central Bedfordshire may lead to a significant increase in freight vehicles travelling through the local area as goods are transferred from long haul rail and onto lorries for onward distribution and visa versa. Conversely, such developments should reduce long haul road movements through the area, particularly on strategic routes such as the A5, as rail haulage takes the place of those movements. The effective management of all these movements onto the appropriate strategic routes and realignment of the local road network will need to be considered according to the requirements of each site. Depending upon the circumstances of individual sites, on-site

¹⁵ As defined in the Control of Major Accidents and Hazards (COMAH) (Amendment) Regulations 2005

¹⁶ All figures are from UK Airport statistics provided by Civil Aviation Authority.

¹⁷ East of England regional Freight Strategy EERA (2009) – see p.30-31.



activities may also impact local communities, although the Core Strategy (para. 8.14) notes that the Sundon site is in a location where such impacts would be reduced.

Currently only a small volume of freight is transported via waterways within Central Bedfordshire and there is only limited potential to make greater use of this mode. For example, an economic impact assessment of the B-MKW concluded that the new canal, once constructed, is unlikely to act as a freight route¹⁸. Two potential, and relatively minor, freight activities were identified:

- Transport of construction materials generated by new settlements in the Marston Vale.
- Transport of freight (primarily waste) within the local area.

The study asserts that potential use of the B-MKW as a freight route within the 'near' term is reliant primarily upon regional and local authorities capitalising upon opportunities to align construction of new developments and the canal. The canal could be utilised for the movement of aggregates and other construction materials during the initial build phase of residential and commercial developments.

New communities could be designed to be sympathetic to waterway. By enabling a reduction in road movements the canal could support aspirations outlined in the North Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy of making any new settlement in the area more environmentally sustainable.

Once again the Authority in its role as planning authority has potentially the greatest sway to facilitate achievement of the objectives of this strategy concerning alternative freight modes. Working with the development community the Authority can help ensure residential and commercial developments are located within proximity of canals, railways and the like, appropriate links to these networks are provided as are transfer and loading facilities.

8.3 Environmental Assessment

Encouraging the movement of freight by modes that are less damaging to the environment than vans and lorries is an important principle of this strategy. However, this has to be done in ways that do not cause significant adverse effects on the environment in other ways.

The key issue here is that the location of new interchange facilities for freight is inevitably dictated by operational needs (e.g. a site has to have good road access on a designated freight route, and be served by rail or canal). In considering proposals for such interchange facilities, care needs to be taken that significant adverse impacts on the environment are not caused that will outweigh the environmental advantages of transferring freight off the roads.

Invariably, any such new proposal seeking planning permission would need to be subjected to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) under the relevant planning regulations. Planning permission will not be granted for any such proposal where significant environmental effects that are not capable of mitigation are identified. This will take account of the environmental sensitivity of the site for which proposals may be brought forward, and of the effects on local people living the vicinity of these, and other sensitive environmental resources in close proximity.

¹⁸ Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Economic Impact Assessment SQW consulting (2009)



8.4 Policies

To encourage greater use of rail, water for the transport of freight, the Authority will:

- Encourage new development (including waste facilities and quarries) at locations which can realistically access and utilise alternative modes to road freight.
- Support planning applications that enable greater use of alternative modes to road freight subject to provision of appropriate facilities for freight, industry demand, community needs and anticipated environmental impacts.
- Encourage the use of Central Bedfordshire waterways for the movement of freight (particularly construction and waste freight) where feasible and compatible with other community uses.
- Encourage the design of new developments to be sympathetic to receipt of water freight.
- Support proposed upgrades to rail freight routes running through Central Bedfordshire and development of the Strategic Rail Freight Network

8.5 Specific Proposals

The Authority will undertake the following initiatives to support achievement of the above policies:

- Maintaining an active role in the East-West Rail Consortium and ensure that opportunities to run freight along the preferred routes are fully exploited.
- Maintaining an active role in the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterways Trust and ensure opportunities to cater for the freight needs of forecast growth along the Marston Vale corridor are addressed as the preferred route is confirmed.
- As operations at Luton airport grow, considering development of measures to manage associated freight traffic travelling through Central Bedfordshire.
- Requiring proposals for waste management facilities and aggregate activities to demonstrate that opportunities to transport materials to / from the site by water and rail have been maximised.
- Actively promoting multi-modal decision making advice from the Department for Transport including its Freight Best Practice Programme.



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When you have finished, please put me in your recycling bin or bag

**Central
Bedfordshire**