

Report to Area Plans Sub-Committee D

Date of meeting: 14 June 2006.



Subject: Sainsbury's Distribution Depot, Waltham Point and Holmesdale Tunnel Roadworks

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Democratic Services Officer: Adrian Hendry (01992 – 56 4246).

RECOMMENDATION

That the officers' action regarding the current, temporary arrangement be noted and that a further report be required for the meeting on 6 September 2006 with consultation responses.

Background

1. Planning permission was granted in 2001 to the Sainsbury's Distribution Depot at Waltham Point subject to a section 106 agreement that included lorry routeing arrangements. A designated route for all lorries was agreed using the A121 from the depot to junction 26 of the M25 from where the vehicles travelled to all their delivery points. The A112 (Sewardstone Road) and the A121 west of the depot (Highbridge Street, Station Road, Eleanor Cross Road) were 'excluded' routes.
2. The Agreement included circumstances, such as periods when traffic was averaging only 15 mph on the M25, when the routeing arrangements could be suspended.
3. The arrangements have been working well. Sainsbury's have been fastidious in informing the Council whenever temporary exemptions have been necessary and there is a good working relationship developed between their Transport Manager and officers of the Council.

Holmesdale Tunnel Roadworks

4. Early in May work started on the M25 Holmesdale Tunnel to increase the width of each carriageway to 3 full lanes. The works are estimated to last until December 2007. The working arrangements include the closing of the east facing sliproads at junction 25 for the A10. That means that vehicles travelling from the east – from junction 26 – cannot leave the motorway to join the A10, and vehicles cannot join the M25 from the A10 to travel to the east.
5. The Highway Agency's recommended diversion is to continue to junction 24 and return to junction 25 on the opposite carriageway and join the A10 from the west.

Implications for Sainsbury's Distribution Depot

6. Sainsbury's wrote to the Council at the end of April explaining that these arrangements would have serious consequences for deliveries that they make to 27 stores in north and

central London and Hertfordshire. To follow the Highways Agency's suggestion would add an additional 9,702 miles per week for these 27 destinations alone.

7. The company therefore requested that for destinations for which they have always used the A10 to access, they be permitted to suspend the routing agreement and to use the A121 through Waltham Cross to join the A10 at either of the junctions on the A10 north or south of the M25 junction.

Officers' Response

8. Since the roadworks were to start in early May, an immediate decision was needed on Sainsbury's request. Having regard to:

- (i) the consequences upon journey distances, travel times and fuel use,
- (ii) the alternative suggested not impacting upon Epping Forest residents to any significant degree, and
- (iii) the provisions of the section 106 Agreement allowing for the suspension of the routing agreement in any event when the M25 was effectively 'closed',

officers agreed that for a temporary 3 month trial period, Sainsbury's vehicles could use the A121 through Waltham Cross to access the A10, but only for those vehicle destinations that would have exited the motorway at junction 25 to access the A10. All other lorry deliveries would have to continue to use the M25 if travelling further west than junction 25.

9. This was seen to be a pragmatic solution for a temporary period rather than seeking to enforce the routing agreement to the letter, which might prove difficult bearing in mind the holds-up being experienced on the M25.

10. The 3 month period would allow the Council to monitor the arrangements, to consult with interested parties – Waltham Abbey Town Council, Broxbourne Borough Council and the Highways Authorities: Essex and Herts. County Councils, and to report back to members after the 3 month trial is completed. In addition, Sainsbury's have also been asked to assess whether using junctions 24 or even 23 on the M25 would be more efficient bearing in mind any congestion around Waltham Cross town centre.

11. Sainsbury's also suggested that 3 stores in North London be serviced by using A112 Sewardstone Road south from the depot. However, officers stated that this was unacceptable and the company have dropped that suggestion.

Conclusion

12. The committee is asked to note the officers' actions and to agree to a further report being submitted in September 2006 following the 3 month trial and period for assessment of the trial results. The alternative would be to inform Sainsbury's immediately that following the 3 month trial the routing agreement must be complied with to the letter. This approach is not, however, favoured by officers. The extraordinary works to the Holmesdale Tunnel justifies a considered decision following consultation with interested parties.