

Charney Bassett Parish Council

Application to Oxfordshire County Council (as Highway Authority) 7.5 Tonne Weight Restriction Order

The key concern raised by village residents during preparation of our Community Based Plan (2017)¹ was road safety. Problems caused by Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) have since been raised with OCC, including in its consultation on Area Weight Restriction Orders² and most recently on-site with Chris Grain in October 2024. Resident concerns about HGVs have also been raised at Parish Council meetings, including several attended by County Councillor Lee Evans.

The aim of this report is to show the impact of HGVs on Charney. The Parish Council asks that OCC gives consideration to making a Weight Restriction Order as a means of dealing with it. The report was approved for submission to OCC at a meeting of the Parish Council on 14th January 2026.

In summary, our concerns about HGVs are:

- The effect on the surface of local roads;
- The damage caused to road verges and drainage;
- The impact on three historic road bridges spanning the Ock;
- The danger and inconvenience to other road users (including horses, cyclists and pedestrians);
- The amenities of residents living next to affected roads.

OCC's Freight Strategy seems to recognise all of these concerns. Its aim is said to be the delivery of "a safe and attractive environment where people and goods can move around freely." HGVs using roads through a pretty village such as Charney Bassett and on surrounding roads barely wide enough for two cars to pass is surely the very antithesis of this aim.

Charney Bassett

Charney is home to some 230 residents and is a typical 'North Berkshire' village, with various listed buildings, a Conservation Area and an Ancient Monument on its Village Green. Many of the homes front roads with no footpaths and feel more exposed to the impact of HGVs as a result (Plan at Appendix 1). Within the village there are particular pinch points at:

- New Road/Buckland Road junction;
- Field View (Longworth Road – just north of junction of Buckland Road with Main Street);
- Mill Cottage/Charney Mill (Lyford Road).

¹ Many of these issues have been addressed since, including installation of White Gates at village entrances, acquisition of two Movable Vehicle Activated Signs (MVAS) and equipment for Speedwatch, but the issue of HGVs is still outstanding.

² Input to OCC's county-wide study of possible Area Weight Restriction Orders and follow up correspondence with Joe Kay (Oxfordshire Transport Strategy Team Leader) 13th May 2024.

We have not been able to conduct a reliable HGV count but would be happy to try to organise something if OCC felt this important. Photos at Appendix 2, mainly taken randomly by walkers in the recent past, show the variety of vehicles that use Charney's roads. Residents will attest to the fact that these movements can be at any time of the day or night, but more noticeable early morning and late afternoon/early evening.

Charney Bassett is situated in an area of open countryside and is set to retain its 'Open Countryside' designation in the emerging Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2041. For a village identified as being in an unsustainable location (and therefore not appropriate for further development) it is perhaps ironic that it should suffer from HGV traffic as it does.

Why is there HGV traffic in Charney?

Charney Bassett is at the centre of a triangle formed by three roads identified in OCC's Freight Strategy as appropriate for Freight Traffic (the A415 (Link to Smaller Towns) cuts across the top of the triangle:

- A420 (Link to Larger Towns);
- A338 (Link to Larger Towns);
- A417 (Link to Smaller Towns);

Charney is within 2 miles of the A420 and this has made the area attractive to commercial operators.

None of the lanes that link Charney Bassett to the above roads are identified in the Strategy as 'Local Access Routes'. Despite this, roads that link Charney to the main roads identified are being used by HGVs accessing commercial sites that have become established around Charney in the last 30 years or so. Some of these sites have had planning permission (mostly retrospective) and some not. Some have had restrictions imposed, some not. This inconsistent approach has failed to prevent HGVs accessing sites from the A420 through Charney Bassett. Sites in and around Charney giving rise to HGV movements, or having the potential to, are shown in the plan at Appendix 3. Details of the sites are set out in Appendix 4.

The villages to the south of Charney Bassett do not suffer this problem as they are protected by an Area Weight Restriction Order (7.5 tonnes). As shown on plan (Appendix 3), this certainly looks to have influenced site location. Without appropriate intervention this pattern is only likely to continue.

Denchworth Area Weight Restriction Order (the Denchworth Order)

This Order was first made in 1976 to protect villages and roads south of Charney from the effects of construction traffic on the former Grove Airfield. The Order was then extended in scope (and made permanent) in 1978 to protect the area from HGVs transporting minerals from a newly permitted quarry at Baulking. That quarry is now exhausted and has been restored, but the Order remains in place.

The reasons for imposing the Order are stated as:

- To protect the structure of rural roads;
- To avoid danger to other users of those roads;
- To protect the amenities of the areas through which the roads pass.

Charney Bassett was not included in the Order but has since become vulnerable to the type of commercial lorry traffic that could otherwise have been inflicted on the Denchworth area but for the Order. The roads in the Charney area are no different to the roads around Goosey and Denchworth, being minor rural lanes of narrow width and often awkward alignment. Moreover, two of Charney's roads cross the river Ock on narrow historic bridges.

Charney's Bridges

These three bridges are used regularly by HGVs and are not covered by the Denchworth Order (plan at Appendix 3). Because of their restricted width and alignment, the potential for damage to the bridges, and cost to OCC in repairing them, is obvious – as has been demonstrated only recently.

Lyford Bridge

This narrow stone bridge dates from 1837 and is a grade 2 listed structure. It is not wide enough for two cars to pass yet it has been used for some time by HGVs to gain access to commercial premises in Lyford. Almost unbelievably this traffic has included car transporters, sometimes with a trailer (Appendix 2).

Earlier in 2025 the northern rampart to the bridge was seriously damaged and then (in a separate incident) almost completely demolished (Appendix 2). Reports were filed on 'Fix My Street' but the repair is having to wait whilst other priorities are dealt with. The damage is clearly extensive and is going to be expensive for OCC to repair to a standard befitting a listed building.

Mill Stream Bridge

This bridge is of similar date to Lyford Bridge and has also suffered damage from heavy traffic. In 2008 it was the subject of a feature article in the Daily Telegraph (Appendix 5).

Ock Bridge

Again, of similar age and construction (stone; c 1837) Ock Bridge, like Mill Stream, is barely wide enough for two cars to pass. It is currently subject of a 'Fix My Street' report of damage to the sub-structure – visible from adjoining farmland.

The case for a Weight Restriction Order covering Charney

That the area around Charney Bassett is seen as a desirable location for the type of commercial development served by HGVs is demonstrated by the number of commercial sites detailed in Appendix 4. Unchecked this is only likely to continue, proximity to A420 being an obvious draw factor for these operations. OCC's Freight Strategy supports our view that the area is not a suitable location in planning terms for commercial sites served by HGVs, as one of its six key principles states:

- ***Plan the location of new employment sites and any related transport infrastructure so that these can function well, with efficient freight access to and from the strategic transport network without adverse impacts on local communities, road users and the environment.***

The rural roads in and around Charney can in no way be described as a network allowing efficient freight access to the A420. Any HGV that uses these roads and passes through the village has an obvious adverse impact on residents, other road users and the environment. Whether this amounts to one lorry a day, five, ten or more (this obviously varies daily) movements do occur daily. And for those in the area they are obvious, repetitive and also annoying – if only for the fact everyone knows it is simply a matter of common sense that they should not be happening. Knowing there is an OCC policy that confirms this fact just rubs salt into the wound.

A Weight Restriction Order would at least ensure that plans for any further commercial development in the area are made in a way that ensures resulting lorry traffic does not impact further on Charney Bassett and its unsuitable approach roads. That clearly hasn't been the case to date.

A further principle underpinning the Freight Strategy is that of 'Deterrence'. This also supports the view that HGV traffic should not be allowed to use Charney and its approach roads, viz:

- ***“Deter use of inappropriate minor roads and movements through towns and villages and other environmentally sensitive areas, except where this is essential for local access. This also helps to minimise damage by lorries to road surfaces and bridges. We will set out our policy on the introduction of further environmental weight limits in Oxfordshire and on their enforcement.***

There are no commercial operations within the area of the proposed Weight Restriction Order, and it is not essential that sites just outside the should rely on roads through Charney for access. Indeed, it was actually the owner of one of these sites that identified a suitable alternative (A420/A415/Fyfield Wick/ Winter Lane) at an earlier public inquiry. The only problem is that:

- Site 2 should have an agreement in place to require that this alternative be used, but Vale Planning have yet to succeed in getting this signed;
- Site 3 actually has no planning permissions for the various uses that generate lorry traffic, and no attempt appears to have been made to regulate the site;
- Site 5 has a planning permission but no control exerted on lorry routeing.

Unless Vale Planning can confirm otherwise, lack of effective action has probably led to most, if not all, of these uses being immune from planning control. A Weight Restriction Order is likely to be the only means available to force HGV traffic off the roads in and around Charney.

In summary, the value of designating a Weight Restriction Order to cover Charney Bassett would be to:

- send a clear message to landowners that further commercial development generating any HGV movements from A420 and through Charney Bassett is not acceptable;
- give the tools necessary to officers (both OCC Highways and Vale Planners) to reject proposals for further commercial development on existing and new sites that will give rise to additional HGV traffic;
- reduce and possibly eliminate HGV movements in the village by leaving sites outside the cordoned area to be accessed by an alternative route (A420; A415; Fyfield Wick; Winter Lane);
- reinforce existing planning restrictions and act as a further deterrent to HGV traffic accessing sites through Charney Bassett in an unauthorised manner.

Proposed extent of a Weight Restriction Order

It is proposed that the following roads be included in the Order (map at Appendix 3).

- All of the County Roads in the Parish of Charney Bassett, being:
 - o Longworth Road;
 - o Buckland Road;
 - o Main Street;
 - o New Road;
 - o Lyford Road
 - o Denchworth Road.
- That section of Longworth Road in the Parish of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor that extends north from the Charney Bassett Parish boundary to its junction with the Faringdon Road.
- That section of the Denchworth Road in the Parish of Denchworth that extends south from the Charney Bassett Parish boundary to its junction with Northmead Lane.
- That section of Lyford Road in the Parish of Lyford extending eastwards from Lyford Bridge (being the boundary with Charney Bassett Parish) to the un-named road that provides access to Lyford Village itself.
- That section of Buckland Road extending westwards from the Charney Bassett parish boundary to its junction with the B4508 at Gainfield.

We are not familiar with the rules that apply to the use of relevant road signage, so it is possible that the extent of the area could be reduced by the provision of advanced warning signage (Weight Restriction Ahead) at key points e.g. at the Buckland Road/B4508 junction and at the junction of Winter Lane with the road serving Sheephouse Farm.

Being so close to the Denchworth Area Order it might be that a separate Order is not necessary and the existing Order extended. We are not experts and are obviously open to discussion with OCC on detail.

Practical Points

Despite its sound policy principles about where HGVs should and should not go, OCC's Freight Strategy is undermined by its somewhat frank acknowledgement that OCC funding for new Weight Restriction Orders is going to be difficult. Whilst this reality has to be recognised, we still ask that OCC acknowledges that an Order would be justified and worthwhile. Even if a means cannot be found in the short term to implement it, such a statement would itself provide a valuable benchmark against which future planning decisions involving HGV movements are taken.

The Freight Strategy does make suggestions on how a new Order might be financed, including through funding from other agencies such as the Parish Council and the use of various planning powers – including S.106. The use of these planning powers could surely be more effectively used if OCC acknowledges a long-term aim of designating a Weight Restriction Order for Charney? And if developer contributions are to be relied on, they could surely not be justified without such a statement?

Given the uncertainty on funding, OCC is asked to consider 'Unsuitable for HGVs' signage as an interim measure at:

- The northern end of the Longworth Road (at its junction with Faringdon Road);
- The western end of the Buckland Road (at the Gainfield cross-roads);
- The southern end of Denchworth Road (at its junction with Northmead Lane);
- The eastern end of the road serving Sheephouse Farm (at its junction with Winter Lane);
- On the Lyford Road at its junction with the un-named road that provides access to Lyford Village.

This step should go hand in glove with an insistence that these roads are not flagged on lorry sat nav systems. If they are taken off the databases used to support HGV sat navs, this would also be a valuable step in either reducing or eliminating HGV traffic through Charney (see also Article in Appendix 5).

Conclusion

We urge OCC to recognise the value of extending the area of the Denchworth Order to include Charney Bassett and to work with the Parish Council (and Vale as necessary) to find a way to make it happen. In the meantime, we ask that 'Unsuitable for HGVs' signs be used to reinforce the message that HGVs should avoid using village roads.

Charney Bassett Road Safety Group
(for) Charney Bassett Parish Council (14th January 2026)