

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 8 December 2025

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: East Sussex Freight Strategy 2025 – 2050

Purpose: To seek approval of the East Sussex Freight Strategy 2025 – 2050.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) note the outcomes of the stakeholder and public consultation undertaken in May/June 2025 on the draft East Sussex Freight Strategy;**
 - (2) acknowledge the importance of the strategy in setting out the County Council’s key priorities for freight in East Sussex, which will place the Council in a stronger position to lobby for future funding and support the development and delivery of future investment to support the movement of freight in East Sussex;**
 - (3) approve the Freight Strategy, at Appendix 1, which is a modal strategy supporting the East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4, 2024 – 2050; and**
 - (4) delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to make future minor amendments to the strategy.**
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1 Background Information

1.1 The fourth East Sussex Local Transport Plan 2024 – 2050 (LTP4) was adopted by the Council at its Full Council meeting on 8 October 2024. It sets out how East Sussex County Council and partners will plan and provide transport for residents, businesses and visitors in East Sussex, now and for future generations. It plans for people and places by focussing on enabling and encouraging greater integrated journeys and reducing the need to travel through land use and planning policies that support sustainable travel.

1.2 In relation to freight, the ‘Keeping East Sussex Connected’ chapter within the LTP4 focuses on supporting people and businesses in getting where they need to go, quickly and reliably - specifically, longer distance highway, railway and bus schemes. LTP4 includes a specific policy on freight, which focusses on safeguarding the region’s prosperity through holistic freight and logistics planning, incorporating innovative rail and last mile solutions to ensure freight movements to and from East Sussex are optimised and decarbonised.

1.3 The draft East Sussex Freight Strategy, as outlined in Appendix 1, emphasises the opportunities to support the efficient movement of goods across the county. It recognises that freight is critical to the productivity of the county’s businesses and people’s everyday lives through the movement of goods to shops and between business to business, homes and local collection points, and in supporting the growing expectation of on-demand deliveries.

1.4 The draft Strategy focusses specifically on the opportunities to support improvements, through partnership working, to infrastructure, services and initiatives that relate to 4 priority investment areas, including:

- 1) Strategic freight movements (includes mapping of freight and logistics infrastructure, freight activity hotspots, signage and wayfinding, increase capacity of Newhaven Port for rail freight),
- 2) Decarbonisation (includes zero-emission vehicles in council fleets, charging infrastructure),
- 3) Last mile logistics (includes air quality and noise mapping and last mile strategic hubs),
- 4) Planning and policy (includes construction logistics and delivery and servicing plans and freight awareness workshops)

1.5 Once adopted the East Sussex Freight Strategy 2025 – 2050, will be a modal strategy supporting the East Sussex LTP4 2024 - 2050.

2 Supporting Information

Roles and responsibilities for freight

2.1 The draft strategy highlights that the county's ambitions for freight will require partnership working to achieve its vision and objectives. Accordingly, the strategy recognises the different role and responsibilities across the industry between the local planning authorities, the County Council, Network Rail (NR)/Great British Railways (GBR), freight operating companies (FOCs), Transport for the South East (TfSE), other freight organisations such as Logistics UK and the Road Hauliers Association, operators and users.

2.2 As a result of the development of the strategy, the County Council was invited to join the '[Wider South East Freight Forum](#)'. This was established by Transport for the South East (TfSE), England's Economic Heartland (EEH) and Transport East (TE) sub-national transport bodies and enables collaboration between the freight and logistics industry representatives such as Logistics UK, the Road Haulage Association, local authorities, business representatives, and ports and airports, with recognition that the movement of goods does not stop at borders. This forum will enable the Council, now and in the future, to more effectively understand and engage with the industry on the constraints and opportunities relating to freight and work with the key stakeholders to either influence or support the delivery of improvements and support innovation.

Devolution, Local Government Reorganisation and other key strategies

2.3 The draft Freight Strategy embraces the establishment of the Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) for Sussex and Brighton from May 2026, and recognition of local government reorganisation which will result in new unitary authorities across the West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and East Sussex geography from April 2028.

2.4 The establishment of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton will result in devolved powers and funding for strategic planning, transport and economic growth from central government, resulting in the transport priorities for the wider Sussex geography being eventually set by the new Mayor through the development of a joint Local Transport Plan, but also the development of a Spatial Development Strategy, to guide sustainable growth and development. This draft Freight Strategy focuses on the types of measures that key strategic and local partners, alongside working with the County Council, can develop and deliver. This will ensure that the Council is in a stronger position to respond to any changes in local powers and enable the Council to confidently set out priorities for freight to the Mayor and to lobby and apply for future funding from the Sussex and Brighton MCCA and central government.

2.5 The Freight Strategy also supports other strategies covering local, regional and national geographies. A non-exhaustive summary of these strategies is presented in section 4 of the Freight Strategy with a succinct overview of each strategy and how this links to the Freight strategy. These linkages show that this strategy has strong connections to the economy, environment, visitor sector and spatial planning. There will also be benefits to other important sectors such as public health, which will become clearer as interventions are developed in more detail and ultimately delivered.

Engagement and Consultation on draft strategy

2.6 Significant engagement has taken place with stakeholders as part of the development of the strategy, including a desk-based policy review, focused stakeholder engagement meetings, and a stakeholder and public consultation.

2.7 A stakeholder and public consultation was held between 6 May and 30 June 2025. As a result, 31 responses were received via the online portal, and 7 responses via e-mail. The Council also engaged with young people in a bespoke event. Whilst this may be considered a low response rate, responses were received, particularly from key strategic and local stakeholders, that will be critical in supporting the delivery of the strategy. A consultation summary report is set out at Appendix 2.

2.8 The analysis of responses demonstrated that two thirds of the online respondents agreed that they supported the draft strategy. Most respondents showed broad agreement with the proposed freight roles, priorities, and schemes. High levels of support were noted for Freight

Strategy elements across themes, especially decarbonisation, last-mile solutions, and planning integration.

2.9 Strategic freight movements and planning policies were also well supported. There was a clear call for rail freight expansion and modal shift to reduce emissions and congestion.

2.10 Concerns remain about whether schemes can be delivered, their local impacts, and a lack of consideration for how schemes could be funded. Stakeholders seek stronger planning clarity and inclusive governance.

Freight routing network

2.11 In September 2023, the Lead Member for Transport and Environment considered a petition relating to the approach to freight movements in East Sussex, as set out in the County's third Local Transport Plan (LTP3) which needed updating, and called on the County Council to introduce a lorry route network similar to the one in West Sussex, so that Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) are redirected away from narrow local roads in villages to reduce impacts of noise, vibration, safety and air quality. The Lead Member resolved that the existing freight routing network would be reviewed as part of the development of a new East Sussex Freight Strategy, which will form part of the County's LTP4.

2.12 The approach and policy to (road) freight in East Sussex set out in LTP3 and 'Control of HGVs' policy PS4/5 advises that as so few roads in the County are really suitable for HGVs, it was expected that the "A" and "B" roads in the county should be available to carry heavy lorries thereby allowing them to disperse over the available road network rather than to concentrate them on selected roads.

2.13 In response to the petition and Lead Member's resolution, consideration was given to the freight routing network as part of the development of this draft Freight Strategy. It is acknowledged that HGVs using routes through villages and towns can have actual and perceived negative impacts on local communities. However, it is important to note that East Sussex has no motorway provision, the quality of the strategic and major road (A class) network serving the county is inconsistent with only 30 miles of dual (2 lane) carriageway.

2.14 Whilst consideration has been given to introduce a freight routing network so that HGVs be redirected away from B class roads through villages, this would place additional pressures on the limited A roads in the county, impacting on overall journey times for all road users, increasing journey times for HGV drivers and costs for operators (which in turn may be passed onto customers) due to vehicles having to take a longer distance and timed route.

2.15 Therefore, it is recommended that the existing freight routing network policy for HGVs to use A and B roads wherever possible remains. However, the draft Freight Strategy includes several policies related to improving relationships between partners, local planning authorities and communities to gather evidence and a greater understanding of freight-related issues, in particularly affected villages, and identifying whether any alternative measures could be introduced which could potentially reduce or mitigate the negative experiences of HGVs for residents through villages. It should be noted that this will be subject to available resource and funding and importantly whether this is a priority for the emerging Sussex and Brighton MCCA, which will be established by May 2026, as they will set the priorities for transport and strategic planning across the wider Sussex geography.

Updates to the draft strategy following consultation

2.16 In consideration of some of the points raised as part of the consultation the key changes to the strategy include the following:

- 1) strengthening of the evidence base – specifically the strategic case for the investment priority areas referring to international gateways, changing freight fleet, constraints on the road network for freight movements, devolution, freight logistics in town centres and local, regional and national strategies.
- 2) clear demonstration of the role of the County Council in bringing measures forward within the priority investment areas (i.e. where possible - lead, advocate (project partner) and support (stakeholder))
- 3) confirmation that the County Council's policy 'Control of HGVs (PS4/5)', which highlights the need for the continued use of both A and B class roads being available to carry HGVs will remain unchanged.

- 4) clear demonstration of freight priorities for East Sussex within the strategy and how the Council will seek to achieve them, in a manner that can be easily transitioned to wherever the decision-making, planning and policy sits within the forthcoming establishment of the MCCA for Sussex and Brighton and local government reorganisation.

2.17 There were a small number of responses to the question regarding the Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA), and these will be incorporated into the significant update to the LTP4 EqIA that will be published in Spring 2026.

3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The ambition for freight in East Sussex is to support the efficient movement of goods as it is critical to both the productivity of the county's businesses and people's everyday lives through the movement of goods to shops and between business to business, homes and local collection points, and in supporting the growing expectation of on-demand deliveries. This aligns with the East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) adopted by the County Council in October 2024 and will also align with the other modal strategies being developed or updated post publication of the LTP4.

3.2 Significant evidence gathering, stakeholder engagement and consultation have been undertaken which has constructively shaped the draft East Sussex Freight Strategy. As set out in paragraph 2.16, the strategy has been updated to reflect some of the key consultation comments received. Consequently, the 4 priority areas for investment set out in paragraph 1.4 have been identified as part of this process.

3.3 The strategy has been developed for the County Council to demonstrate its priorities for freight, how the Council can achieve them and how progress can be made on these in the short term, subject to available resource and funding, whilst also taking full account of the forthcoming changes arising from devolution and local government reorganisation. The Strategy will be a live document, and therefore adaptable to reflect the impending changes.

3.4 Following the Lead Member's consideration of a petition on freight routeing in the county in September 2023, a review of the existing freight routeing network - that allows the distribution of HGVs across the A and B class road network in the county - has been undertaken as part of the development of the draft Freight Strategy. Whilst consideration has been given to introduce a freight routeing network so that HGVs be redirected away from B class roads through villages, this would place additional pressures on the limited and inconsistent quality A class road network in the county. Therefore, the draft Freight Strategy sets out that the existing freight routeing network policy for HGVs using A and B class roads wherever possible should remain. Given the impact of freight movements on local communities, the draft Freight Strategy identifies a policy and workstream related to better understanding localised impacts with communities and opportunities for mitigating these impacts.

3.5 It is recommended that the Lead Member for Transport and Environment note the responses from the stakeholder and public consultation undertaken on the draft East Sussex Freight Strategy earlier this year, as set out in the consultation summary report at Appendix 2, and approve the Freight Strategy, as set out in Appendix 1, as a modal strategy supporting the East Sussex Local Transport Plan. The Lead Member is also recommended to acknowledge the Strategy's importance in setting out the County Council's key priorities for freight in East Sussex given the forthcoming devolution of powers to the Sussex and Brighton MCCA as well as changes arising from local government reorganisation.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Consultation responses

[Equalities Impact Assessment for the draft Freight Strategy](#)