

Highway Maintenance Hierarchy Review: Road Categories

Report of the Chief Officer for Highways, Infrastructure Development and Waste

1. Introduction

This report provides an update to Place Scrutiny Committee on the review of the Highway Maintenance Hierarchy and the classification of the Devon Road Network.

The view of Place Scrutiny is sought on the review process including:

- alignment of the criteria and route categories with neighbouring local highway authorities;
- consultation with Local Councils to validate the officer analysis of road category.

2. Background

A highway network road hierarchy is the foundation of a coherent, consistent and auditable maintenance strategy.

A highway network hierarchy is crucial to asset management planning as different levels of service can be associated with different maintenance categories for key assets, like roads, footways and cycleways.

A highway network hierarchy is also used as part of the statutory network management role for the co-ordination of authorities work on the highway and regulating occupation of the highway.

A road network hierarchy should reflect the needs, priorities and actual use of each road, Categorisation within the hierarchy will be determined by a number of factors including:

- Connectivity for example, between primary destinations; feeder routes between A Roads; links to villages; routes within small communities; links to key local facilities like a major hospital.
- Environmental factors applying to roads, for example, in rural and urban areas, busy shopping streets, residential streets.
- Traffic volumes including vehicular, non-vehicular traffic and pedestrian traffic.

Collectively, these issues may be referred to as the 'functionality' of a road.

3. Existing Hierarchy

The last comprehensive review of the road maintenance categories was undertaken in the early 1980's and at that time Parish Councils were invited to comment. The outcome of the 1980's review was the existing hierarchy referred to as the Devon Road Network.

No comprehensive changes have been made since the 1980's although where locally significant changes have taken place individual categories have been amended accordingly.

The Devon Road Network assigns each road to one of 12 maintenance categories as shown in Table 1.

4. Reasons for Review

A revised National Code of Practice, Well Managed Highway Infrastructure (WMH), was published on 28 October 2016. The Code promotes the adoption of an integrated asset management approach to highway infrastructure based on a risk-based approach for the establishment of local levels of service. The intention is that Authorities will develop their own levels of service and the Code therefore provides guidance for authorities to consider when defining levels of service to take account of local needs, priorities and affordability. A road network hierarchy based on asset function is the foundation of a risk-based maintenance strategy.

The new code makes particular reference to the importance of continuity with the road hierarchy of neighbouring authorities. In response to this the South West Highway Alliance (SWHA) has developed a network hierarchy with the aim of it being adopted by all South West authorities. The benefit of providing consistency of approach across the region is that it will strengthen an authority's legal position on highway safety inspections and the ability to defend highway claims.

To align with the South West Highway Alliance proposal, Devon needs to review the existing highway network.

5. Process of Review and Change.

Officers have compared the existing Devon Network road categories with the recommendations of the National Code of Practice (WMH) and the proposals developed by the South West Highways Alliance. The outcome of the review is presented for information in Appendix 2.

The outcome of the officer review process will be published and public comment will be invited.

Feedback will be analysed and where valid suggestions for change are evidenced, changes will be taken on board.

At the end of the review process, the new Devon Road Network will be published so that it is widely available.

6. Proposal

It is proposed that the South West Highways Alliance hierarchy will be adopted for the future management of Devon's highway network so as to ensure an approach consistent with other highway authorities in the region.

The criteria for each road category and the officer assessment of categories will be published on the DCC Website.

County councillors, Town and Parish Councils will be notified. They will be invited to examine the criteria and respond where they feel the road category has been incorrectly assigned.

Consultation feedback will be reviewed and, where the evidence compared to the published criteria support the case, a road category will be amended.

The review process is programmed for completion by October 2017. Once completed, the Devon Road Network, showing road category for every public road in Devon, will be published on the DCC website and adopted for future use by Devon as the Local Highway Authority.

7. Summary

The new Devon Road Network will provide an up to date category for every public road in Devon. This is important in clarifying levels of service and in delivering the agreed Highway Asset Management Plan for Devon.

It is not anticipated that the consultation will result in much change to the length of road in each of the Devon Road Network categories.

The Maintenance Hierarchy Review enables alignment with the recommendations of the National Code of Practice (WMH) and with the road hierarchy of neighbouring highway authorities in the South West.

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Electoral Divisions: All

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Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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| Background Paper | Date | File Ref. |
|--|-------|-----------|
| Nil | | |
| jd011216psc Highway Maintenance hierarchy Review | hk 04 | 201216 |

Table 1 – Current DCC Maintenance Categories (MC)

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|--|
| DCC MC1 |
| Maintained by Highways England |
| DCC MC2a – Primary National (Trunk Road) |
| Maintained by Highways England |
| DCC MC3 National Primary Route |
| National strategic routes for through and long distance travel (A roads) |
| DCC MC4 County Primary Route |
| Main access routes connecting principal settlements |
| DCC MC5 County Secondary Route |
| Main access routes to large settlements and recreational areas |
| DCC MC6 Local Distributor |
| Access routes to smaller settlements and recreational attractions |
| DCC MC7 Collector Road |
| Rural – Access routes to small villages and other significant traffic generators Urban – Industrial main collector roads & through routes and Residential collector roads. Access to schools, hospitals, facilities for the disabled, main shopping areas, libraries, car parks and tourist attractions. Shared surfaces with heavy pedestrian traffic. Local roads serving limited numbers of properties |
| DCC MC8 Minor Collector Road |
| Rural – Roads serving small hamlets and scattered communities Urban – Roads serving shopping areas, business premises, industrial estates and residential areas |
| DCC MC9 and MC 10 Service Road |
| Rural – Local road serving only a few properties (MC10 – One property) Urban – Narrow collector roads and shared surfaces (MC10 – Cul-de-sac serving less than 20 properties) |
| DCC MC11 Minor Lane |
| Rural – Serving fields only or duplicating other routes Urban – Back Lanes |
| DCC MC12 Track |
| Not used by normal vehicular traffic |

Table 2 Comparison of National (WMH), SWHA Regional and Devon County Council Categories

This table identifies the re-allocation of current DCC maintenance categories when SWHA hierarchy is adopted

| General Description | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| WMH 1 Motorway | | | | DCC MC1 |
| Limited access motorway regulations apply. | Routes for fast moving long distance traffic. Fully grade separated and restrictions on use. | | | |
| | | | | DCC MC2a – Primary National (Trunk Road) |
| WMH 2 Strategic Routes | | SWHA Category 2 – Strategic Route | | DCC MC3 National Primary Route |
| Trunk and some Principal 'A' roads between Primary Destinations. | Routes for fast moving long distance traffic with little frontage access or pedestrian traffic. Speed limits are usually in excess of 40 mph and there are few junctions. Pedestrian crossings are either segregated or controlled and parked vehicles are generally prohibited. | Trunk and some Principal 'A' roads between Primary Destinations. | Routes for traffic travelling long distances, often with little frontage access or pedestrian traffic. Speed limits are usually in excess of 40 mph and there are few junctions.. Pedestrian crossings are either segregated or controlled and parked vehicles are often prohibited. Not always National Speed Limit. | |
| WMH 3a – Main Distributor | | SWHA Category 3 – Main Distributor | | DCC MC4 County Primary Route |
| Major Urban Network and Inter Primary Links. Short medium distance traffic. | Routes between Strategic Routes and linking urban centres to the strategic network with limited frontage access. In urban areas speed limits are usually 40 mph or less, parking is restricted at peak times and there are positive measures for pedestrian safety. | Major Urban Network and Inter Primary Links. Short medium distance traffic. | Routes between Strategic Routes and linking urban centres to the strategic network often with limited frontage access. In urban areas speed limits are usually 40 mph or less, parking is often restricted at peak times and there are positive measures for pedestrian safety. | |

| General Description | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| WMH 3b Secondary Distributor | | SWHA Category 4 – Secondary Distributor | | DCC MC5 County Secondary Route |
| B and C class roads and some unclassified urban routes carrying bus, HGV and local traffic with frontage access and frequent junctions. | In residential and other built up areas these roads have 20 or 30 mph speed limits and very high levels of pedestrian activity with some crossing facilities including zebra crossings. On-street parking is generally unrestricted except for safety reasons. In rural areas these roads link larger villages, bus routes and HGV generators to the Strategic and Main Distributor Network. | Classified Road (B and C class) and unclassified urban bus routes carrying local traffic with frontage access and frequent junctions. | In rural areas these roads link the larger villages and HGV generators to Strategic and Main Distributor Network. In built up areas these roads have 30 mph speed limits and very high levels of pedestrian activity with some crossing facilities including zebra crossings. On-street parking is generally unrestricted except for safety reasons. | |
| WMH 4a Link Road | | SWHA Category 5 - Link Road | | DCC MC6 and MC7 Local Distributor and Collector Roads Part DCC MC8 (Urban) Minor Collector Road |
| Roads linking between the Main and Secondary Distributor Network with frontage access and frequent junctions. | In urban areas these are residential or industrial interconnecting roads with 20 or 30 mph speed limits, random pedestrian movements and uncontrolled parking. In rural areas these roads link the smaller villages to the distributor roads. They are of varying width and not always capable of carrying two-way traffic. | Roads linking between the Main Secondary Distributor Network with frontage access and frequent junctions. | In rural areas these roads link the smaller villages to the distributor roads. They are of varying width and not always capable of carrying two way traffic. In urban areas they are residential or industrial interconnecting roads with 30 mph speed limits random pedestrian movements and uncontrolled parking. | |

| General Description | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| <i>This Category does not appear in Well Managed Highways Infrastructure and is a sub-division of category 4a</i> | | SWHA Category 6 - Local Link Road | | Part DCC MC8 (Urban) Minor Collector Road |
| | | Roads connecting Link Roads and other Distributor Roads. Local Link Roads usually have frontage access and junctions onto Local Access Roads. | These roads are residential interconnecting roads, usually with uncontrolled pedestrian movements. They provide well used vehicular links within the local access roads. | |
| WMH 4b Local Access Road | | SWHA Category 7 – Local Access Road | | DCC MC8 Rural Minor Collector Road Part DCC MC9 Service Road |
| Roads serving limited numbers of properties carrying only access traffic. | In rural areas these roads serve small settlements and provide access to individual properties and land. They are often only single lane width and unsuitable for HGVs. In urban areas they are often residential loop roads or cul-de-sacs. | Roads serving limited numbers of properties carrying only access traffic. | In rural areas these roads serve small settlements and provide access to a number of properties or land. In urban areas they are often residential streets, cul-de-sacs or small industrial estates. | |
| WHM 5 Minor Road | | SWHA Category 8 - Minor Road | | Part DCC MC9 and MC 10 Service Road |
| Little used roads serving very limited numbers of properties. | Locally defined roads. | Local roads serving an extremely limited number of properties or agricultural land. | In rural areas these form minor access roads to houses and farms. In urban areas these form minor side roads and vehicular alleyways | |

General Description

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|----------------------------|
| <i>This Category does not appear in Well Managed Highways Infrastructure and is a sub-division of category 5.</i> | | SWHA Category 9 - Lanes | | DCC MC11 Minor Lane |
| | | Minor routes and low use tracks that provide access to isolated buildings. | In rural areas these often narrow metalled roads serving isolated agricultural buildings. In urban areas are often metalled no through lanes serving garages or the rear of properties. | |
| <i>This Category does not appear in Well Managed Highways Infrastructure and is an additional category below 5</i> | | SWHA Category 10 – Green Lanes and Tracks | | DCC MC12 Track |
| | | Lanes and tracks that are unsuitable for vehicular traffic. | Lanes and tracks that are unsuitable for vehicular traffic but may be used as a footpath, part of a Cycle Trail, or by horse riders, generally for leisure purposes. | |
| <i>This Category does not appear in Well Managed Highways Infrastructure and is an additional category below 5.</i> | | SWHA Category 11 - Disused Tracks | | Not in DCC M/C |
| | | Unmetalled tracks that are unrecognisable as a road. | Roads that have become unrecognisable as such, having fallen into disuse through regression or agricultural use. | |