



SENIOR TRAFFIC COMMISSIONER

Statutory Document No. 4

OPERATING CENTRES, STABLE ESTABLISHMENTS & ADDRESSES FOR SERVICE

This document is issued pursuant to section 4C of the Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981 (as amended). Representative organisations have been consulted in accordance with that provision.

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Senior Traffic Commissioner

GUIDANCE

1. The Senior Traffic Commissioner for Great Britain issues the following Guidance under section 4C(1) of the Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981 (“1981 Act”) and by reference to section 1(2) of the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Act 1995 (“1995 Act”) to provide information as to the way in which the Senior Traffic Commissioner believes that traffic commissioners should interpret the law in relation to operating centres and stable establishments.

Goods Vehicles Legislation: The Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Act 1995

2. Under section 7 it is an offence to use a place in any Traffic Area without authority from the traffic commissioner to use that site as an operating centre for heavy goods vehicles.¹ An operating centre is the base or centre at which a heavy goods vehicle is normally kept. The site must be specified on the licence. Section 23(6) makes it an offence to contravene any condition attached to an operating centre. The licence must also either include a provision under s5(2)(b) providing that no trailers are authorised to be used under the licence or, by virtue of s6(2)(a), it shall specify a maximum number for trailers.
3. Under section 5(1) of the 1995 Act, vehicles (whether specified on the licence or not) and trailers authorised to be used under an operator’s licence are those in the lawful possession of the licence-holder. It therefore follows that there is no authority to operate trailers where the licence does not specifically authorise the use of trailers.
4. Under section 8(1A), a separate application must be made in relation to each traffic area in which there is to be an operating centre for heavy goods vehicles (for the purposes of sections 7(1) and 13C(5)). In contrast, operators of light goods vehicles must apply in each traffic area where there is located premises of the kind described in paragraph A1(2)(a) of Schedule 3, i.e. relating to effective and stable establishment.² The majority of the following provisions do not relate to the operation of light goods vehicles save for the requirement for the traffic commissioner to publish notice³ so that objections can be received under section 12(1)(a).
5. A traffic commissioner is obliged to refuse an application or variation application for heavy goods vehicles, without considering the merits, unless he or she is satisfied that notice of the application has been published in one or more local newspapers circulating in the locality during the period beginning 21 days before the date on which the application is made and ending 21 days after that date.⁴ Section 33 allows, with the permission of the traffic commissioner, for the transfer of an operating centre from one licence to another in prescribed situations.⁵ Section 18(5) confirms that those in the locality should be alerted to the potential grant of authority to use an operating centre.⁶ It follows that all

¹ Section 5(4)(b) does not preclude a traffic commissioner from taking action against an operator for any associated breaches

² See below paragraphs on [Stable Establishment](#)

³ Section 10

⁴ Section 11(1) & (2), section 18(1) & (2)

⁵ See also Statutory Guidance and Statutory Directions on Case Management with regard to applications made under Schedule 4

⁶ Section 11(4), section 18(5)

applications for a heavy goods vehicle operator's licence, bar those described above under section 33, must be published with details of the proposed operating centre and the time and manner for making an objection or representations against the grant of the application.⁷ The majority of variation applications will fall within this category for example where they seek an increase in the number of goods vehicles or trailers at an existing operating centre. However, where the locality is not affected, such as an increase in overall licence authority which does not impact on the authorisation at an operating centre, there is no requirement to take a newspaper advertisement, under section 18.⁸

6. The traffic commissioner does have a discretion to accept an advert if just the format or contents of the notice of application do not comply with the prescribed requirements and the traffic commissioner is satisfied that no person's interests are likely to have been prejudiced by the failure.⁹
7. **Objectors:** the following are entitled to make statutory objections¹⁰ (known as objectors) against the issue of an operators' licence:
 - a Chief Officer of Police;
 - a Local Authority (but not a Parish Council);¹¹
 - a Planning Authority;¹²
 - The British Association of Removers;
 - Logistics UK, formerly the Freight Transport Association;¹³
 - GMB, formerly the General and Municipal Workers Union;
 - The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers;
 - The Road Haulage Association;
 - Unite the union, formerly the Transport and General Workers' Union, before its merger with Amicus¹⁴;
 - The Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers;
 - The United Road Transport Union;
 - a prescribed trade union as defined in the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.¹⁵
8. Objectors may oppose the grant of an application or variation application.¹⁶ The grounds for making an objection are that the applicant does not meet the following requirements:¹⁷
 - to be of good repute (standard licence) or unfit (restricted);
 - to have available the required level of finance;

⁷ See the OTC Guide to Making Representations, Objections and Complaints - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-guide-to-making-representations-objections-and-complaints-goods-vehicle-operator-licensing>

⁸ The traffic commissioner is still required to publish notice under section 17(3)

⁹ Section 11(3), section 18(4)

¹⁰ Section 12(2), section 19(2)

¹¹ As defined by section 12(12)

¹² As defined by section 12(12)

¹³ Regulation 10 of the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Regulations 1995 does not currently reflect this change

¹⁴ Regulation 10 of the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Regulations 1995 does not currently reflect this change

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-list-of-active-trade-unions-official-list-and-schedule>

¹⁶ Section 12(1), section 19(2)

¹⁷ Sections 13A to D

- to have adequate facilities or arrangements for maintaining the relevant vehicles in a fit and serviceable condition;
 - to have adequate arrangements for securing compliance with the requirements of the law relating to the driving and operation of those vehicles;
 - to have an effective and stable establishment (standard licence);
 - to be of professional competence with a designated traffic manager who meets the requirements¹⁸ (standard licence); or
 - a proposed operating centre will be unsuitable on environmental grounds.¹⁹
9. While the Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency is not a statutory objector it has put in place procedures to ensure that every publishable application is checked so that all relevant evidence is brought to the attention of the relevant traffic commissioner. Traffic commissioners can only act on the basis of admissible evidence, as opposed to mere intelligence or suspicions.
10. **Representors:** any person who is the owner or occupier of land within the vicinity of a proposed operating centre can make representations²⁰ against the grant of a heavy goods vehicle application or variation application on the grounds that that place will be unsuitable as an operating centre which would be capable of prejudicially affecting the use or enjoyment of their land. A variation application is any application seeking an increase in the number of vehicles (and trailers if appropriate), or the number of vehicles above a certain weight, to use that operating centre; or to vary any undertaking or condition on the licence relating to that operating centre.
11. Objections and representations must:
- set out the objection or representation;
 - particulars of the ground on which it is made;
 - particulars of any matters alleged by the person making the objection or representation to be relevant to the issue to which it relates;
 - be signed either by the relevant individual, by all of the partners of a firm or by one of them with authority of the others, or for a company or corporate body by one or more authorised persons, or a solicitor acting on behalf of an individual, firm, body or group;
 - a copy must be sent to the applicant on the same day or the next working day after delivery to the traffic commissioner.
12. An objection to an application or variation application must be made during the period commencing immediately after notice of the application is published and ending 21 days after the date on which notice of the application is published in Applications and Decisions.²¹
13. A representation opposing an application or variation application must be made in the period of 21 days beginning with the date on which notice of the application is published in one or more local newspapers circulating in the locality.²²

¹⁸ See Statutory Guidance and Statutory Directions on Transport Managers

¹⁹ Objections under section 12(1)(b) apply to heavy goods vehicles only

²⁰ Section 12(4), section 19(5)

²¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/traffic-commissioner-applications-and-decisions>

²² Regulations 12 and 13 of the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Regulations 1995

14. The traffic commissioner can, if he or she considers there to be exceptional circumstances, direct that a late objection or representations be treated as made within the prescribed time or in the prescribed manner.
15. Where the traffic commissioner receives an objection and/or representation which meet the requirements, the traffic commissioner may refuse an application or variation application on the grounds that:
 - the parking of vehicles used under the licence at or in the vicinity of the place in question would cause adverse effects on environmental conditions in the vicinity of that place; or
 - the place in question would be unsuitable for use as an operating centre of the holder of the licence on other than environmental grounds.
16. The traffic commissioner may not refuse an application or variation application on other than environmental grounds if:
 - on the date the application was made, that place was already specified on an operator's licence issued by the commissioner as an operating centre of the holder of that licence, or
 - the applicant has produced to the traffic commissioner a certificate²³ stating that its use as an operating centre is or would be lawful.
17. The traffic commissioner must consider every objection or representation which meets the requirements when deciding whether to hold a public inquiry.
18. A site does not become acceptable just because it forms part of an operating centre which is or has been already specified on an operator's licence or was specified on an interim licence specified by virtue of an interim direction or conditions relating to the exercise of the right of any person to appeal or a review under section 36. A traffic commissioner has power to refuse the application or issue the licence specifying only for the site(s) which the traffic commissioner considers suitable.
19. Section 34 of the Act and regulation 15 of the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Regulations 1995 describe the relevant factors in determining:
 - the suitability of any place on environmental grounds for use as an operating centre of the holder of an operator's licence;
 - whether to attach any condition or to vary or remove a condition;
 - the environmental impact of the use of any operating centre.
20. The relevant considerations are as follows:
 - the nature and use of any other land in the vicinity and any effect which the use as an operating centre has or would be likely to have on the environment of that vicinity;
 - where the proposed site is, or has previously been, used as an operating centre, the extent to which the grant of the application would result in any material change, which would adversely affect the environment of the vicinity;

²³ Section 191 or 192 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, or section 90 or 90A of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972

- where the land has not previously been used as an operating centre, any information known about any planning permission or application for planning permission relating to the land or any other land in the vicinity;
 - the number, type and size of motor vehicles or trailers;
 - the arrangements for the parking of motor vehicles or trailers;
 - the nature and the times of the use of the proposed site;
 - the nature and the times of the use of any equipment installed at the proposed site for the purpose of being an operating centre;
 - the means and frequency of vehicular ingress to, and egress from, the proposed site.
- 21.** In reaching a decision the traffic commissioner is entitled to take into account any undertakings offered by the applicant or licence-holder and any conditions that might be attached to the licence in question and may assume that any conditions so attached will not be contravened. Any decision must be proportionate. The traffic commissioner may attach any conditions that he or she thinks necessary for preventing or minimising any adverse effects on environmental conditions arising from use of a site as an operating centre.
- 22.** The traffic commissioner, however, cannot attach or vary a condition to impose new or further restrictions without first giving the applicant or the licence-holder an opportunity to make representations. Conditions may include restrictions on²⁴:
- the number, type and size of motor vehicles or trailers which may be at the proposed site;
 - the parking arrangements to be provided at or in the vicinity of the proposed site;
 - the times of operation, maintenance or movement of any authorised motor vehicle or trailer and the times at which any equipment may be used for those purposes;
 - the means of ingress to and egress from.
- 23.** A traffic commissioner may review the grant of an operating centre five years from the date of granting the licence and each consecutive period of five years thereafter to consider whether to exercise any of the powers under sections 31 and 32. The notice of review of an operating centre must be served on the Operator²⁵ at the current correspondence address lodged with the Office of the Traffic Commissioner within two months of that date.²⁶ Representations may be made to the traffic commissioner in relation to a review. Those representations must:
- set out the basis of the complaint and contain particulars of any matters alleged by the person making the representations to be relevant to the issue to which they relate;²⁷
 - clearly identify the person making the representations;
 - relate to the relevant operating centre;
 - the land or property in the vicinity which is owned or occupied by the person making the representations;

²⁴ Regulation 14

²⁵ See Statutory Guidance and Statutory Directions on Legal Entities

²⁶ Regulation 1

²⁷ Section 31(5)(b)

- be signed either by the relevant individual, by all of the partners of a firm or by one of them with authority of the others, or for a company or corporate body by one or more authorised persons, or a solicitor acting on behalf of an individual, firm, body or group.
- 24.** The traffic commissioner retains a discretion to treat representations as valid, notwithstanding that they were not in the prescribed manner or made within the period of review.
- 25.** Section 31 of the Act allows a traffic commissioner to remove an operating centre from a licence on review if satisfied that a site is unsuitable on the grounds:
- that the parking of vehicles used under the licence at or in the vicinity of the place causes adverse effects on environmental conditions in that vicinity²⁸; or
 - other than environmental grounds.
- 26.** Representations shall be disregarded if any adverse effects on environmental conditions would not have been capable of prejudicially affecting the use or enjoyment of the relevant land.
- 27.** If the traffic commissioner does not remove an operating centre, section 32 of the Act allows a traffic commissioner to attach additional conditions and may also vary the licence by directing:
- that any vehicle cease to be specified on the licence;
 - that the maximum number of vehicles and/or trailers authorised be reduced;
 - that there be a restriction on the weight of vehicles and/or trailers; or
 - the variation of existing conditions.
- 28.** There is special provision for vehicles being used under the terms of The Goods Vehicles (Operators' Licences) (Temporary Use in Great Britain) Regulations 1980 as amended by The Goods Vehicles (Operators' Licences) (Temporary Use in Great Britain) (Amendment) Regulations 1990, which include provision for the use in Great Britain of vehicles that have an operating centre in Northern Ireland.

Transfer of Operating Centres

- 29.** Section 33 and Schedule 4 allow for the variation of heavy goods vehicle licences where the applicant's (new or applicant for a variation) proposed operating centre is already specified on another operator's licence (excluding interim licences). The requirements relating to publication in the locality and to the making of objections and representations against the issue of the licence do not apply.
- 30.** The site in question must already be specified on an operator's licence as an operating centre. It cannot be a sub-division of that operating centre and no place can be specified on more than one operator's licence. Where there are conditions or undertakings attached to the existing licence relating to the use of the site the applicant must first consent to those conditions being attached to the licence for those restrictions to apply. In determining the application, the traffic commissioner must take account of whether any new adverse effects on

²⁸ The traffic commissioner may not give this direction unless representations were made during the period of review (subject to exceptional circumstances)

environmental conditions are likely to arise from the use of the operating centre and can take account of any other matters he or she considers relevant.

31. The traffic commissioner may refuse the application if any statement of fact made by the applicant was false, whether to his knowledge or not, or any undertaking given, or statement of expectation made by the applicant has not been fulfilled.
32. The grant of an interim licence does not give rise to a legitimate expectation such that a traffic commissioner is prevented from taking subsequent action particularly if made clear that further intervention remains an option.²⁹

Passenger Carrying Vehicles Legislation: The Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981

33. The position of PSV licences is markedly different from that of goods licences. Section 12 states that a PSV shall not be used on a road for carrying passengers for hire or reward, except under a PSV operator's licence. In order for a licence to be granted the applicant must have one or more operating centres in the relevant Traffic Area.³⁰
34. **Objectors:** Section 14A provides that where there is an application for a PSV operator's licence any Chief Officer of Police or Local Authority may object to the grant of the licence. That objection must:³¹
 - be in writing;
 - be made within the 21-day period starting the day after the notice of application is published in Notices and Proceedings³²;
 - set out the basis for the objection;
 - be signed by or on behalf of the person making the objection;
 - a copy must be sent by the objector to the applicant on the day or the next working day after it is made.

The grounds for making an objection are that the applicant does not meet the following requirements:³³

- to be of good repute;
- to be of appropriate financial standing;
- to have adequate facilities or arrangements for maintaining the relevant vehicles in a fit and serviceable condition;
- to have adequate arrangements for securing compliance with the requirements of the law relating to the driving and operation of those vehicles;
- to have an effective and stable establishment (standard licence);
- to be of professional competence with a designated traffic manager who meets the requirements³⁴ (standard licence).

²⁹ [2006/149 A & C Nowell Ltd](#)

³⁰ [2022/057 Brett Pennells](#)

³¹ Regulation 5 Public Service Vehicles (Operators' Licences) Regulations 1995

³² <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/traffic-commissioner-notices-and-proceedings>

³³ Sections 14ZA to C

³⁴ See Statutory Guidance and Statutory Directions on Transport Managers

It follows that although an operating centre address must be provided, a traffic commissioner does not have to approve or review its suitability in the same way that the suitability of a goods vehicle operating centre has to be assessed.

35. While the Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency is not a statutory objector it has put in place procedures to ensure that every publishable application is checked so that all relevant evidence is brought to the attention of the relevant traffic commissioner. Traffic commissioners can only act on the basis of admissible evidence as opposed to mere intelligence or suspicions.
36. There is no consideration of the environmental suitability of a PSV operating centre. However, section 20(3) of the Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981 clearly refers to vehicles being normally kept at the authorised operating centre. There must therefore be sufficient capacity. As important, the requirements at section 14ZC(1)(b) which apply to both standard and restricted licences includes adequate arrangements for securing compliance with the requirement of the law relating to the driving and operation of relevant vehicles. A traffic commissioner is therefore entitled, for example, to consider the ability of drivers to conduct a driver daily walk round check within the proposed operating centre.³⁵ A traffic commissioner might also, for example, consider the safety of the point of access or egress in order that the laws on safe driving can be complied with.
37. In considering an application for a PSV operator's licence the traffic commissioner may take into account any undertakings given by the applicant and is entitled to expect those undertakings to be adhered to.

Stable Establishment

38. This requirement applies to standard goods (HGV and LGV) and PSV licences only. It is set out in paragraph A1 of Schedule 3 of the 1995 Act and Articles 3 and 5 of Regulation (EC) 1071/2009 (see Annex 1) respectively and requires any undertaking engaged in the occupation of road transport operator to have an effective and stable establishment in a Member State.³⁶ That establishment must be in the Member State in which it is licensed. This is the address where it must keep its core business documents and in particular accounting documents, personnel management documents, documents containing data relating to driving time and rest periods and any other document to which the traffic commissioner or enforcing authorities may require access in order to verify compliance with the requirements of the licence.³⁷

In practice these documents, electronic or original copies, will be as follows:

- contracts relating to the transport service;
- accounting documents;

³⁵ A driver is expected to do a thorough check of the vehicle during which they might need to crouch down beside the vehicle or step back to check the topside. By way of comparison, all ATF testing areas must be at least 2 metres wider than the vehicle being tested. If there is not enough space to carry out these checks in the vehicle's parking space then the operator may be required to demonstrate there is sufficient capacity at the operating centre for these checks to be carried out before the vehicle enters the public highway.

³⁶ Part 34 of the Companies Act together with the Overseas Companies Regulations 2009 and Overseas Companies (Execution of Documents and Registration of Charges)(Amendment) Regulations 2011 allow an overseas company carrying on business in the UK and with a physical presence here to register a UK establishment

³⁷ See licence conditions and undertakings

- personnel management documents;
- employment contracts;
- national insurance documents;
- tachographs, driver's hours and working time records;
- documents containing data on the dispatching and posting of drivers;
- driver defect reports;
- preventative maintenance records;
- annual test records;
- prohibitions and related documentation;
- copies of driving licences;
- copy of the Transport Manager's certificate of competence;
- any other documentation related to compliance with the operator licence requirements.

39. The premises must allow the operator to conduct its operations effectively and continuously to meet with the requirements of the licence, including:

- i) any administration necessary for complying with those requirements; and
- ii) appropriate technical equipment and facilities for an operating centre.

Due to the different nature of the matters to be addressed and the possibility of multiple licences³⁸ the Senior Traffic Commissioner has interpreted this requirement so as to allow a number of sites, for instance an office and a separate Operating Centre, which go to meet this requirement.

40. Where a traffic commissioner receives information, which brings into question the ability of an existing operator to meet the continuing stable establishment requirement, for instance non-compliance with an undertaking, then the traffic commissioner is entitled to ask for evidence that the requirement is still met.³⁹

41. The requirement is that once an authorisation has been granted, the operator must have access to one or more vehicles. This is different from having vehicles specified on a licence but the vehicle(s) in question must be registered and be capable of being put into circulation. The vehicle(s) in question may be wholly owned or, for example, held under a hire-purchase agreement or a hire or leasing contract. An informal or unwritten agreement is unlikely to meet this requirement. In addition, standard goods (HGV and LGV) operators must have a number of drivers available in Great Britain that is proportionate to the national or international transport operations and the number of goods vehicles operating from the stable establishment.⁴⁰

42. For standard goods (HGV and LGV) operators, paragraph A1 of Schedule 3 of the 1995 Act requires entities to have a VAT registration number where, under the Value Added Tax Act 1994, they charge value added tax on the supply of transport services. Companies must have a registered office address and charge income tax or corporation tax under the Tax Acts on income generated through the person's transport service.⁴¹

³⁸ See Statutory Guidance and Statutory Directions on the Delegation of Authority

³⁹ [2005/486 McKillop Trucking Ltd](#), [2023/1077 Direct Services Logistics Ltd](#)

⁴⁰ See Statutory Guidance and Statutory Directions on Legal Entities

⁴¹ See Statutory Guidance and Statutory Directions on Legal Entities

Case Law

43. This Guidance may be subject to the decisions of the higher courts and to subsequent legislation. The Senior Traffic Commissioner has extracted the following principles and examples from existing case law. As the legislation suggests the case law is mainly concerned with goods vehicle applications. The Upper Tribunal has held that a traffic commissioner will not be wrong in law if they follow lawful directions given by the Senior Traffic Commissioner.⁴²

General Approach

44. Whilst the Transport Tribunal has set out a general approach to public inquiries involving operating centres the principles can be equally applied to the whole process of considering an application and any opposition. In particular, if determining a matter at a public inquiry, the Transport Tribunal has stated that: *“It would be advantageous...that the presiding traffic commissioner at the beginning... sets out the extent of his or her jurisdiction and the nature and type of evidence he or she can and cannot take into account. This may assist in focusing the minds of all participants...upon the evidence that is relevant”*.⁴³ It is also helpful if commissioners and caseworkers adopt this approach when considering matters “on the papers” and that objectors and representors are reminded of the limits of traffic commissioners’ powers when they are being notified of traffic commissioners’ decisions or proposed decisions. An applicant or operator can be taken to be aware of the various guidance documents issued on behalf of the Senior Traffic Commissioner.⁴⁴

Normally Kept

45. A traffic commissioner’s jurisdiction in respect of an operating centre is limited to vehicles authorised by the operator’s licence which are kept there and does not extend to visiting vehicles. The issue of where a vehicle is normally kept when not in use is a question of fact and degree in each case and so it will therefore fall to the traffic commissioner to make the necessary findings.⁴⁵ Consequently this is a difficult area and there is little guidance which can be issued in this regard. The Transport Tribunal has found against operators where in one instance a fifth of an operator’s vehicles were parked away from the operating centre on most weekends⁴⁶ or outside the operator’s home for a few weeks⁴⁷ and where an operator has previously been warned. Whilst considering the drafting of conditions the Upper Tribunal has in other cases relied on the dictionary definitions, for instance ‘occasionally’ where an event occurs ‘infrequently’ and/or ‘irregularly’.⁴⁸
46. The requirement to respond to correspondence sent on behalf of the traffic commissioner and to keep the traffic commissioner informed of changes of

⁴² [2023/511 Morgan J Ltd](#)

⁴³ [2001/084 Gary Royston Way](#)

⁴⁴ [2012/030 M G M Haulage & Recycling Ltd](#)

⁴⁵ [2000/014 Reids Transport Ltd](#). In [Smit Reizen BV v Minister van Verkeer en Waterstaat \(C-124/09\)](#) The European Court of Justice referred to [Skills Motor Coaches Ltd v Denman \[2001\] All ER \(EC\) 289](#) in defining the ‘operating centre’ for the purposes of drivers’ rest periods as the place to which a driver is usually attached, namely the transport undertaking facilities from which he usually carried out his service and to which he returned

⁴⁶ [2003/147 W C Hockin \(Transport\) Ltd](#)

⁴⁷ [2006/277 Michael James Fenlon trading as County Skips](#)

⁴⁸ [2010/034 W P Commercials Ltd](#)

address is an important one⁴⁹, even where no vehicles are specified.⁵⁰ A failure to do so can result in severe action.⁵¹ Section 26(11)(d) gives a traffic commissioner the power to remove any one or more places specified as an operating centre from the relevant licence.⁵²

Adverts

47. The Tribunal has been explicit in its decisions regarding adverts. Section 11 of the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Act 1995 is clear in its terms: namely that a traffic commissioner shall refuse an application for a heavy goods vehicle licence without considering the merits unless section 11(2) has been complied with. Section 11(2) requires an applicant to publish a notice of the application in a local newspaper within the period of 21 days before or 21 days after the application is made.⁵³ This, on first reading, effectively gives operators and applicants an apparently wide 6-week period in which to place a correctly worded advert and it is unsurprising that the Transport Tribunal has felt that it has no alternative other than to interpret the section narrowly.
48. The result of the refusal of an advert which does not meet section 11 is that a completely new application has to be made and any appeal is likely to fail.⁵⁴ This may add significantly to the burden on the applicant/operator and on staff members who will find themselves dealing with an identical application almost immediately. In order for the legislation to work, it is only at the point of consideration of the application that the staff will be able to ascertain if the advert falls within the 21-day provision and in cases where it does not in many instances it may be too late for the applicant/operator to re-advertise. Similarly, staff may consider adverts that have been placed by the applicant/operator within the 21-day period before the submission of the application and there may be difficulties with this advert and by the time this can be communicated to the applicant/operator the 21-day period cannot be complied with.
49. It was previously considered to be undesirable that there should be appropriate time limits for documents to be provided for certain parts of legislation to be complied with, but this must be considered along with the effect of a strict interpretation of section 11. In considering this matter, previous Senior Traffic Commissioners have sought to take a purposive approach to section 11. That provision is intended to ensure that those who are entitled to make objections and representations against the specification of a proposed operating centre are given proper notice of the application by an advert in the local newspaper. In reality those reading that local newspaper will be highly unlikely to be prejudiced by the acceptance of an advert that falls outside the 21-day period by a short period of time.⁵⁵
50. Consequently, a practice has developed so that, where an application does not apparently comply with section 11(2) the relevant date is either:

⁴⁹ [2022/1528 Philip Drake](#)

⁵⁰ [2022/480 Mark McBurney t/a MMB Haulage](#)

⁵¹ [2005/411 Frank Maas \(UK\) Ltd](#)

⁵² [2002/020 H.A.U.C. Ltd](#)

⁵³ [2014/086 Cole Crispin Ltd](#)

⁵⁴ [2021/467 D A Prime Log Ltd](#)

⁵⁵ Section 11(2) states that if the advert is not published 21 days either side of the date on which the application is made, a traffic commissioner must refuse the application without consideration of the merit

- (a) the date that the application is first considered by a caseworker; or
- (b) the date of signature of the application provided that this date is no more than 14 days before the date of actual receipt at the Office of the Traffic Commissioner.

- 51.** In contrast there is discretion given to the traffic commissioner in relation to the content of the advertisement.⁵⁶ But even then adverts must be in the clearest of terms and an advertisement which, for instance, provides the wrong address⁵⁷ or fails to state the correct number of vehicles being applied for, does not fulfil that requirement: *“the purpose of the requirement to advertise ...is to ensure that members of the public whose use and enjoyment of their land may be adversely affected by the operation of vehicles under a licence shall have an opportunity to make representations to the traffic commissioner”*.⁵⁸ Paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 of the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Regulations 1995 requires the notice to record the number of “heavy goods vehicles”. Regulation 3 gives this the same interpretation as section 58 of the 1995 Act and means a goods vehicle⁵⁹, or a vehicle combination including a goods vehicle, that has a maximum laden weight exceeding 3.5 tonnes.
- 52.** The term ‘one or more local newspapers circulating in the locality’ has not been fully considered or defined in case law and it has therefore proven difficult to ensure a consistency of approach. Furthermore, some applicants and operators have chosen to place the advert in some newspapers that are not normally regarded by people living in the locality as the “local” newspaper.
- 53.** The intention of section 11 can be inferred from 11(3), where explicit reference is made to prejudice, namely to potential representors. The intention is therefore to alert owners or occupiers of land within the vicinity. Traffic commissioners will not be criticised where they refuse to accept adverts which do not contain the required information such as the details for lodging representations.⁶⁰ The correct approach is to consider whether the application has been correctly advertised and if not, whether the failure is likely to have prejudiced the interests of other people.⁶¹ Where an applicant declines to employ credible advertising to meet the objects of the statute not only will this result in consequent delay but might also go to issues of fitness and/or to decisions on whether to admit late representations.
- 54.** To ensure a consistent approach the Senior Traffic Commissioner now issues the following guidance:
- for Section 11(2) to be complied with the traffic commissioner must be satisfied that the advert is placed in “one or more local newspapers circulating in the locality”;
 - “circulating”⁶² is to be interpreted in accordance with its usual meaning and assistance will be obtained from the dictionary definition; circulation – the

⁵⁶ [2003/120 JCM Print Services Ltd, 2003/169 Project 2000 Europe Ltd](#)

⁵⁷ [2022/044 Secure Transit Solutions Ltd](#)

⁵⁸ [2011/048 Stripstar Ltd trading as Halshaw Burnley Ford](#)

⁵⁹ Section 58 further defines a “goods vehicle” as a motor vehicle constructed or adapted for use for the carriage of goods, or a trailer so constructed or adapted, but does not include a tramcar or trolley vehicle within the meaning of the Road Traffic Act 1988

⁶⁰ [2009/526 Davis Roofing Ltd](#)

⁶¹ [2012/059 Kevin Smith trading as Midland Marble Ltd, 2003/116 A Reid](#)

⁶² Compact Oxford English Dictionary 3rd Edition

public availability of something: the number of copies sold of a newspaper or magazine.

Available

- 55.** Traffic commissioners cannot and should not become involved with matters of planning law or consent.⁶³ A site is available, pending a final determination⁶⁴ but it must actually be available at the date of determination not a date in the future.⁶⁵ The Transport Tribunal has stated that traffic commissioners should not be invited or expected to investigate or resolve outstanding questions of property law: *“If the operator shows that he is the owner or tenant of the land in question there is no obligation on the Traffic Commissioner to study the title deeds to ensure, for example, that they do not contain a covenant which would prevent the land being used as an operating centre....if it became clear to the Traffic Commissioner that proceedings had been commenced, which would decide whether or not the land could lawfully be used as an operating centre the Traffic Commissioner would need to consider very carefully whether or not it was appropriate to wait until those proceedings had been resolved”*.⁶⁶
- 56.** Traffic commissioners do not have the necessary jurisdiction to seek to adjudicate upon a dispute of a technical nature as to whether a particular use might be lawful or not. Planning law provides the appropriate route for such disputes to be resolved.⁶⁷ Traffic commissioners must simply be satisfied that the site is ‘available’ for use as an operating centre.⁶⁸ If the position is that the applicant has no right of way over the point of access, then it is difficult to see how the operating centre could be available.⁶⁹

Suitable

- 57.** It is for the applicant to satisfy the traffic commissioner that a proposed site is suitable as an operating centre.⁷⁰ Section 13 of the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Act 1995 requires the traffic commissioner to view *“suitability as a whole”* rather than subject to the limitations on conditions as set out at section 21.⁷¹ There are limitations, however, to the traffic commissioner’s jurisdiction: *“matters to do with the condition and suitability of a particular road which inter alia have significance for road safety can also have significance in a totally separate environmental context”*.⁷² The case law acknowledges that traffic commissioners frequently have a difficult task when dealing with environmental matters and that the situation is exacerbated if planning and highway authorities have chosen not to become involved. In such cases the traffic commissioner

⁶³ Surrey CC v Paul Williams (trading as Garden Materials Landscaping) v SoS for Transport [2003] EWCA Civ 599 on appeal from [2001/056 Surrey County Council v Paul Williams trading as Garden Materials Landscaping, 2021/2168 PED Plant Ltd](#)

⁶⁴ [2003/087 Jonathan Hansford trading as Jonathan Hansford Plant Hire](#)

⁶⁵ [2010/060 Subic Solutions Ltd, 2021/2168 PED Plant Ltd](#)

⁶⁶ [2004/202 David Holloway](#)

⁶⁷ [2021/2168 PED Plant Ltd](#)

⁶⁸ Traffic commissioners should be alive to the risks of becoming involved: whereas enforcement notices could not previously be challenged except under section 174 Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the case of [R \(on the application of Altunkaynak\) v Northamptonshire Magistrates’ Court \[2012\] EWHC 174 Admin](#) raises the prospect of an argument that the notice has caused injustice. These are issues outside the traffic commissioner’s jurisdiction

⁶⁹ [2013/085 Karl Dyson and Bryan Dyson](#)

⁷⁰ 1998/K30 King Automotive Systems

⁷¹ 1999/L34,37,41 Norman Marshall Ltd v W Sussex CC and Horsham DC and others

⁷² 1990/B52 J Simms t/a Ukiston Haulage and Storage v Nottingham CC

should ignore planning or other objections in the absence of the appropriate authority.⁷³ It is for a Highways Authority to decide whether a public highway is suitable and/or safe for any particular use⁷⁴ and the traffic commissioner's jurisdiction is limited to consideration of access safety at the point the authorised vehicles first join the highway and that otherwise the suitability of the highway and road safety are irrelevant considerations (as is inconvenience caused to other road users) and vibration caused by vehicles passing on the highway travelling to and from the operating centre. It follows that a traffic commissioner cannot refuse an application on the basis of the suitability of a public road.⁷⁵

- 58.** The Upper Tribunal has rejected the argument that the use of vehicles under section 2 of the 1995 Act should be restricted to when a vehicle is actually being driven as it would undermine the key pillars of operator licensing, including the requirement relating to the suitability of operating centres. They went on to consider the wording of section 2 and 6 of the 1995 Act together and concluded that the sections “*strongly point to a position whereby an operator may generally use, in the course of those specified commercial activities, only the number of goods vehicles authorised.*”⁷⁶ The number of vehicles authorised under a licence is relevant to any assessment of suitability. A commercial vehicle being used as part of the business and run under a licence, must be considered in any assessment of suitability. Operators should allow sufficient capacity for instance where a vehicle is retained as a spare vehicle or for seasonal fleets, even where the vehicle may be subject to an off road declaration.⁷⁷
- 59.** Traffic commissioners should make a distinction between activity on the site lawfully undertaken irrespective of the site being specified as an operating centre and activity incidental to the site being specified as an operating centre. Light pollution and general noise may occur irrespective of whether the site is in fact an operating centre. A traffic commissioner should analyse the evidence carefully and differentiate those matters which relate to use as an operating centre.⁷⁸
- 60.** Certificates of Lawful Use or other permissions from bodies such as the Waste Regulation Authority may be sufficient;⁷⁹ although a Certificate will only be valid for the purposes of Section 14(3) or Section 19(7)(b) if it complies with the wording by stating that the use of a site is “*as an operating centre for vehicles used under any operator’s licence is or would be lawful*”. In any event the existence of a Certificate will not prevent a traffic commissioner from refusing an application under section 14(2)(a) or 19(6)(a).⁸⁰

⁷³ [2005/356 Edwards Transport \(Shropshire\) Ltd](#)

⁷⁴ 1987/Y17 Scorpio International Ltd v Lancashire CC & South Ribble BC

⁷⁵ [2003/157 North Kent Recycling Ltd](#) - meaning of a road section 58(1) of the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Act 1995: highway remains a road even though the public may be temporarily deprived of access to it

⁷⁶ [2021/2165 Connor Construction \(South West\) Ltd](#)

⁷⁷ See Statutory Guidance and Statutory Direction Introduction on vehicles subject to a Statutory Off Road Notification

⁷⁸ [2008/335 Greaves Surveying and Engineering Ltd](#)

⁷⁹ [2002/029 Trevor Christopher Atkinson & Christopher Atkinson trading as T C Atkinson & Sons](#)

⁸⁰ [2016/036 Darren John Worsley v Waverley Borough Council, Surrey County Council and Others, 2019/039 Upright Scaffold Ltd](#) - the traffic commissioner might request a Certificate is obtained before granting a licence in full, [2020/027 N.A.P Anglia Ltd](#)

Opposition

- 61.** The status of representations should be considered before a traffic commissioner takes their contents into account. Representations received from a person living some distance away have been dismissed by the Transport Tribunal but may have been admissible if the person was genuinely representing the interests of local inhabitants.⁸¹ There is no definition of ‘in the vicinity’. It is for each traffic commissioner to decide in relation to each case. The Upper Tribunal has observed *“that in principle somewhere less than 100 yards might not be in the vicinity and somewhere more than a mile away might be in the vicinity. It all depends on the context.”*⁸² Section 19(5) in effect is the test that determines when land can be found to be in the vicinity. There is no general discretion as to content and format or the timing of representations, as those requirements are set out in the regulations. The discretion to admit representations outside those requirements can only be exercised in exceptional circumstances.⁸³ The ‘ear shot’ test⁸⁴ has been extended and visual intrusion can amount to a relevant consideration in the context of assessing the adverse environmental effect of a proposed operating centre.⁸⁵ The extent to which adverse environmental effects emerging from the site itself can be heard or felt will sometimes be difficult to decide particularly where similar effect might be caused by other plant or visiting vehicles.⁸⁶ A resident living nearest to the site may carry more weight than others who live further away.⁸⁷
- 62.** An objection is valid if made within the prescribed time limit, is clear as to the basis of the objection and gives sufficient detail of the nature of the objection. That being the case the traffic commissioner is bound by virtue of the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Regulations 1995 to consider the objection in considering whether or not to hold a public inquiry.⁸⁸ The traffic commissioner is not however bound to call a public inquiry.⁸⁹
- 63.** Where the application is opposed on environmental grounds the traffic commissioner must consider whether the application (if granted) is likely within the meaning of regulation 15 of the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Regulations 1995 to adversely affect the environment of the vicinity. In relation to any representations or complaint of adverse environmental impact, the matters complained of must amount to a real interference with the comfort or convenience of representors and the matters complained of must be related to the effect which the use of the land as an operating centre has, or would be likely to have, on the environment of that vicinity.⁹⁰
- 64.** It is not unusual for a traffic commissioner to receive anonymous information, for instance, about the conduct of operators. The statutory position is that there is a mandatory requirement in section 12(7) of the 1995 Act for a representation to be made within the prescribed time and in the prescribed manner, both of which

⁸¹ [2004/315 MME Services Ltd](#)

⁸² [2016/031 Tunnell Grab Services Ltd](#)

⁸³ 1984/V22 UK Corrugated Ltd

⁸⁴ 1986/X25 Surrey County Council and Surrey Heath Borough Council v Rupert William Carter & Nicholas David Carter t/a Express Hay & Straw Services

⁸⁵ [2001/084 Gary Royston Way](#)

⁸⁶ 1988/Z37 Ings Transport Ltd and Others

⁸⁷ [2008/542 Absolute Scaffolding Services Ltd](#)

⁸⁸ [2003/145 Norfolk County Council v Woodgrove Ltd](#)

⁸⁹ [2003/145 Norfolk County Council v Woodgrove Ltd](#)

⁹⁰ [2001/084 Gary Royston Way](#)

are set out in regulations. A representation must be made within 21 days beginning with the date on which the notice of the application was published. In addition to sending a copy of the representation to the traffic commissioner, Regulation 11(2) of the 1995 Regulations provides that a copy of the document delivered to the traffic commissioner “shall be sent to the applicant on the same day as, or the next working day after, the delivery to the Traffic Commissioner.” Section 12(8) gives the traffic commissioner discretion to treat a representation as “duly made” even though it was not made in the prescribed manner in “exceptional circumstances that justify his doing so”.

- 65.** The traffic commissioner must be alive to the potential problems which might arise if an applicant is not sent a copy of a representation which is considered to have been duly made. Any failure to ensure that the applicant is not fully informed of the substance of any un-copied representation runs the risk that there will be a breach of natural justice.⁹¹ In the alternative the traffic commissioner might request a report from a traffic examiner on technical suitability and if so must then disclose the contents of that report to all parties. The commissioner is then entitled to attach what weight to the report that they see fit. If the anonymous information is not confirmed during the course of the investigation, no further action about that anonymous information should be taken.⁹²
- 66.** It is open to the traffic commissioner to admit evidence from local residents who have not met the requirements to be treated as a valid representor by calling them as witnesses.⁹³ In doing so the traffic commissioner should ensure the fairness of any future proceedings and witnesses may be required to provide statements in advance so that they can be disclosed to the parties.⁹⁴ The applicant must have the opportunity to consider and respond to any evidence prior to a decision on the application.⁹⁵

Conditions and Undertakings

- 67.** It is for the traffic commissioner to make an assessment of the necessity of any restrictions.⁹⁶ The Transport Tribunal indicated that, having been to the site, the traffic commissioner is in the best position to make an assessment of its suitability as an operating centre.⁹⁷ Section 24(7A)(b) provides that a request for an interim licence shall be treated as an application for an operator’s licence to include section 23, which gives power to impose conditions. Section 23(4) requires a traffic commissioner to give notice so that an applicant can make representations as to the effect on any such condition, which the traffic commissioner must then consider.⁹⁸
- 68.** If a traffic commissioner has any doubts as to the suitability of an operating centre, careful thought should be given to the question of whether practical, realistic and enforceable conditions can be devised to prevent or minimise any adverse effects on environmental conditions arising from the use of a place as

⁹¹ [2010/034 W P Commercials Ltd](#)

⁹² [2005/357 John Bayne & Sons Ltd](#), see Statutory Guidance and Statutory Directions on Case Management

⁹³ [2005/356 Edwards Transport \(Shropshire\) Ltd](#)

⁹⁴ See Statutory Guidance and Statutory Directions on Case Management

⁹⁵ [2005/357 John Bayne & Sons Ltd](#)

⁹⁶ [2009/515 Les Searle Plant Hire & Sales Ltd](#)

⁹⁷ [2001/056 Surrey County Council v Paul Williams trading as Garden Materials Landscaping](#)

⁹⁸ [2015/063 Mr M & Mrs V Smith](#)

an operating centre.⁹⁹ The Upper Tribunal has referred to these powers as giving traffic commissioners the opportunity to reach a balanced outcome by sufficiently reducing noise or other relevant environmental impact of the operation on local residents, whilst not seriously damaging the operator's business.¹⁰⁰

- 69.** The traffic commissioner has to decide whether the site is suitable for use as an operating centre but may take into account any conditions that could be attached to the licence under section 21 and may assume that any conditions so attached will not be contravened. It is not necessary to wait until those actions are carried out. Whether action is required, in order to make a site suitable particularly with regard to ingress or egress or any road (other than a public road) will depend on the individual facts of a particular case.¹⁰¹ If the work is straight forward and agreed then it might be appropriate for the traffic commissioner to grant with a condition to carry out the proposed improvements. As with any condition the obligation is imposed on the operator, it is for the operator to ensure that it can comply.¹⁰²
- 70.** The power to attach conditions to an operator's licence only arises once the traffic commissioner is minded to grant an application. It is at that stage that the traffic commissioner should give the applicant an opportunity to make representations.¹⁰³ There may be pre-inquiry correspondence with different parties but once a traffic commissioner has decided that a public inquiry is necessary there is no expectation to commence a process of negotiations around possible conditions.¹⁰⁴ The traffic commissioner's power to impose environmental conditions under section 23(1) of the 1995 Act can only be exercised if they decide to vary the licence and are satisfied that the variation would result in a material change as regards the operating centre or its use which would adversely affect the environment, as prescribed by regulation 15(1)(b) of the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Regulations 1995. The Upper Tribunal has approved of attempts to clearly define terms used in conditions so that parties are clear about the restrictions¹⁰⁵ giving dictionary meanings to the term 'occasionally' where the occasional need to return outside restricted hours was deemed to be reasonable, an event occurs occasionally if it happens 'infrequently' and/or 'irregularly'. In other words, the variation of the condition to permit occasional out of hours movements will not allow the operator to make a habit of returning late.

Site Visits

- 71.** *"Traffic commissioners decide many applications "on the papers" and it is neither necessary nor practicable for them to conduct site visits as a matter of course when they do so. Recent developments in technology mean that traffic commissioners determining cases "on the papers" are now able to obtain a very clear picture of the proposed operating centre and the surrounding environment.*

⁹⁹ [2011/050 A Tucker & Son Ltd](#)

¹⁰⁰ [2008/542 Absolute Scaffolding Services Ltd](#)

¹⁰¹ 1999/L11 Malcolm Stonehouse v. Surrey County Council

¹⁰² [2008/407 Surrey County Council v Rybak-Rajewski](#)

¹⁰³ [2000/032 T Saunders & Sons Ltd](#)

¹⁰⁴ [2011/050 A Tucker & Son Ltd](#)

¹⁰⁵ [2010/034 W P Commercials Ltd](#)

Where a traffic commissioner has visited the location before reaching a decision is often a matter to which much weight will attach".¹⁰⁶

72. In certain circumstances it may be advisable for the traffic commissioner to conduct a site visit and it is for the traffic commissioner to make an assessment of the necessity of any restrictions and this may be possible where the premises are clearly described in plans and photographs.¹⁰⁷ In cases where further action is required in order to make a site suitable there is no requirement on a traffic commissioner to visit.¹⁰⁸ As a traffic commissioner is entitled to take into account work still to be carried out and it is not necessary to wait until those actions are carried out¹⁰⁹, it would be a legal nonsense to suggest that there is a mandatory requirement for a traffic commissioner to visit every site where an application is opposed. However, it is regarded as essential for a traffic commissioner to conduct a site visit before presiding over any public inquiry convened with regard to the suitability of the proposed operating centre.

Review

73. Whenever a traffic commissioner determines that an environmental review of an established operating centre is appropriate in order to consider the environmental impact of vehicle operation the reviewing traffic commissioner must carry out a careful balancing of the rights of the operator to continue to operate from an established site and the rights of local residents to quiet enjoyment of their property. This may require a detailed analysis of the evidence be undertaken to determine the precise nature of the complaints and to whom they should be directed.¹¹⁰

Address for Service, Correspondence and Contact

74. An important aspect of the trust which lies at the heart of the operator licensing regime is that the traffic commissioner must be able to rely on an operator having in place:¹¹¹
- addresses at which the operator and transport manager can reliably receive important correspondence (whether from the Office of the Traffic Commissioner or an enforcing authority or any other significant source); and
 - a system which ensures that correspondence is fully answered, within any time limit which has been set, or else within a reasonable time limit and if documents are requested that they are sent.

Failure to respond might justifiably lead to suspicion that there has been an unauthorised or un-notified change with the result that the traffic commissioner cannot actively regulate.¹¹² If an operator has been given proper notice of a

¹⁰⁶ Per Rex LJ in *Surrey CC v Paul Williams (trading as Garden Materials Landscaping) v SoS for Transport* [2003] EWCA Civ 599. 2021/225 Paul Bamber - the applicant needs to satisfy the traffic commissioner that any risk to endangering people, vehicles or property when entering or exiting a proposed site can be safely managed

¹⁰⁷ [2009/515 Les Searle Plant Hire & Sales Ltd](#)

¹⁰⁸ 1999/L11 Malcolm Stonehouse v. Surrey County Council

¹⁰⁹ [2008/407 Surrey County Council v Rybak-Rajewski](#)

¹¹⁰ [2007/168 M & M International Ltd, Walker Movements Ltd and CH Walker \(Transport\) Ltd](#)

¹¹¹ [2010/056 Mohamed Aslam trading as Instant Freight](#)

¹¹² [2009/488 D & A Lawrence trading as The Roseglan Hotel](#), [2010/048 Anthony Edwards trading as Jim Bertie Ltd](#)

hearing and fails to attend the operator cannot justifiably complain at a later date.¹¹³

- 75.** Efforts are made to reduce the number of incomplete applications with minor changes or clarification of relevant legislative provisions being dealt with by e-mail or in person, with a record of any decision made. Caseworkers might follow the sensible practice of recording the gist of the conversation, but the obligation is on the operator or applicant to communicate appropriately. The Upper Tribunal has therefore cautioned operators and applicants to respond to any important correspondence by either sending a letter or an email.¹¹⁴ Examples include call-up letters and proposals to revoke a licence or refuse an application. Where an operator or applicant seeks to rely on a communication with the Office of the Traffic Commissioner, they will be expected to produce a copy, for instance of an email or letter, upon request.
- 76.** The legislation sets out requirements for the notification of proceedings¹¹⁵ which allows service by either: i) delivering that notice to the address as previously indicated by the operator or ii) by post or fax to the ‘proper address’ and in the case of a partnership to any partner. The Upper Tribunal has taken a purposive approach in interpreting the 1995 Regulations, which aim to ensure the fairness of the process whilst avoiding procedural argument, thereby allowing notice by letter, attached to an email.¹¹⁶ Actual proof that the relevant notice has come to the attention of the person or body concerned is not required¹¹⁷, however where a delivery receipt is obtained it will be difficult for an operator to argue unfairness. Although a comprehensive approach has been encouraged, as with other tribunals there is no requirement to send call-up letters by recorded delivery¹¹⁸. Any document served by post (properly addressed, prepaid and posted) will be deemed to have been served at the time at which the letter would be delivered in the usual way by post, unless proved otherwise.¹¹⁹ The acceptable methods of communication are set out below. The Upper Tribunal has advised traffic commissioners and caseworkers to consider which of the known proper addresses appear to offer the best chance of bringing the matter to the attention of the party.¹²⁰ The operator/applicant is responsible for what happens to the letter once it arrives.¹²¹
- 77.** A registered address for company or LLP or other purposes such as the register held by the Charity Commission is just as effective for all other correspondence.¹²² It is incumbent on the operator to ensure that the notified address is kept up to date.¹²³ A bare assertion that the operator informed the

¹¹³ [2010/036 Suzanne Stoneman trading as Keith Travel](#)

¹¹⁴ [2010/005 Gary James trading as Gary James Transport](#)

¹¹⁵ E.g. regulations 19 and 20 and Schedule 4 paragraphs 1, 6, and 7 of the Public Service Vehicles (Operators’ Licences) Regulations 1995

¹¹⁶ [2013/074 Highway International Ltd](#)

¹¹⁷ [2000/034 Solent Travel Ltd](#), [2012/006 Goodman Hichens PLC](#) – it may be necessary to send notifications to other addresses known to traffic commissioner’s staff

¹¹⁸ [2010/043 Stephen Mcvinnie trading as Knight Rider](#)

¹¹⁹ Section 7 of the Interpretation Act 1978, [2012/021 W B M Scaffolding Ltd](#)

¹²⁰ [2013/074 Highway International Ltd](#)

¹²¹ [2010/047 Nelson Rogers & Francis Rogers trading as Rogers Fencing](#), [2010/041 Darren Smith trading as DMS Scaffolding](#)

¹²² [2009/455 Martini Scaffolding Ltd](#)

¹²³ [2010/048 Anthony Edwards trading as Jim Bertie Ltd](#), [2010/051 John Perrin trading as J P Scaffolding](#), [2021/504 Andrew Hopkins and Tonna Luxury Coaches Ltd](#)

Office of the Traffic Commissioner of a change of correspondence address is unlikely to be sufficient evidence of notification.¹²⁴

- 78.** A letter inviting the operator/applicant or transport manager to attend a public inquiry should be sent in accordance with the legislative requirements. The provisions in paragraph 15(1) of Schedule 3 of the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Act 1995, requiring notification to be served of the right to make representations where action against the transport manager is in contemplation, are directive rather than mandatory.¹²⁵ The letter should also invite operators to make representations to the traffic commissioner prior to the inquiry in line with the principles of good regulation. The Compliance Code applies when developing policies or principles but not to individual cases.¹²⁶
- 79.** There is no requirement on traffic commissioners to engage with applicants and/or operators prior to or during proceedings except within the protections allowed at public inquiry.¹²⁷ Traffic commissioners should be wary of being drawn into any process of consultation prior to taking statutory action, in view of their wider duty to the public at large¹²⁸ and to the fairness of proceedings.

¹²⁴ [2012/029 M E Kinsley trading as Diamond Fitzgerald Travel](#), regulation 25 Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Regulations 1995 and [2012/021 W B M Scaffolding Ltd](#), [2011/068 Truckit 247 Ltd](#)

¹²⁵ [2000/059 Dolan Tipper Services Ltd](#)

¹²⁶ The Code has no application in individual or judicial decisions, see Statutory Guidance and Statutory Direction Introduction

¹²⁷ [Al-Le Logistics Limited etc. \[2010\] EWHC 134 \(Admin\)](#)

¹²⁸ R v Falmouth & Truro Port Health Authority ex parte South West Water [2001] QB 445

DIRECTIONS

Basis of Directions

- 80.** The Senior Traffic Commissioner for Great Britain issues the following Directions to traffic commissioners under section 4C(1) of the Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981 (as amended) and by reference to section 1(2) of the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Act 1995. These Directions are addressed to the traffic commissioners in respect of the approach to be taken by staff acting on behalf of individual traffic commissioners with regard to operating centres¹²⁹ and stable establishments.
- 81.** Any decision relating to an operating centre relies on the quality of the submission. Decisions on whether to allow opposition, where it does not meet the criteria, and/or to require a hearing, fall within the discretion of the traffic commissioner.¹³⁰ In reaching that decision traffic commissioners are assisted by the case submissions prepared by caseworkers of the Office of the Traffic Commissioner. A submission should be succinct, refer the traffic commissioner to the relevant information and refer to the relevant evidence and legal provisions. Submissions need to be accurate, and any decision must be adequately explained by staff acting on their behalf.¹³¹ It may be necessary, particularly where the proposed site is within a residential area or opposition has been received, for staff members to consider any publicly available images. However, caution should be exercised as a given post code may not provide an image of the specific parking location. It may therefore be preferable to seek details from the applicant rather than risk delaying the application unnecessarily where there is likely to be any contention.
- 82.** Case law makes clear that there is no requirement on traffic commissioners to engage in discussions with applicants and/or other parties before reaching a preliminary decision on whether to call to a hearing. In dealing with interested parties on behalf of a traffic commissioner, members of staff should keep in mind that it may ultimately be necessary to consider the relevant application at a public inquiry and the need to ensure that those proceedings are fair.¹³² Any information to be relied upon should be capable of being disclosed in advance of a hearing or risk an unnecessary adjournment.
- 83.** In the course of processing an application it may be appropriate to request further comments on documents such as responses from the parties and/or a traffic examiner's findings. Each communication with a party should specify a given timetable, the steps required and the potential consequences if a party fails to respond. As the case law suggests, correspondence should also make clear the extent of the traffic commissioner's jurisdiction.

¹²⁹ See also Statutory Guidance and Statutory Directions on Case Management with regard to Schedule 4 applications

¹³⁰ See Statutory Guidance on the Delegation of Authority

¹³¹ [2016/018 Eric Leslie Brown](#)

¹³² See also Statutory Guidance and Statutory Directions on Case Management

Stable Establishment

84. As stated above, the requirement applies to standard licences only and these directions are to be read in conjunction with the above Statutory Guidance.
85. The requirement is not intended to impose a disproportionate burden. Where it is suggested that there may be no stable establishment, for instance where all specified vehicles are removed from the licence, it will be for the Office of the Traffic Commissioner to write to the operator in question seeking an explanation and to then make a submission to the traffic commissioner. If there is no response or other compliance issues arise then the case should be passed to the compliance team in the local Office of the Traffic Commissioner. Where it is established that the operator fails to meet the requirement this may amount to a breach of condition, but it is open to the traffic commissioner to allow the operator a period of up to six months to allow the operator to rectify the situation on the first occasion by demonstrating that the requirement for an effective and stable establishment is now met, but with a warning to prompt future compliance.

Operating Centres – Public Service Vehicles

86. As the legislation suggests no-one, apart from relevant authorities and the police has any right of objection during the application process; there is no provision for representors. The traffic commissioner, however, can receive and consider relevant information from any other interested party, including other operators or members of the public. These should be made in writing so that they can be disclosed in advance should the traffic commissioner determine that a public inquiry is necessary. It is up to the traffic commissioner to decide what weight to attach to that opposition. As the Statutory Guidance indicates, this might include information relating to the technical suitability of any proposed site. Any case submission to a traffic commissioner should include confirmation of the technical suitability of the proposed operating centre. Initial enquiries may include reference to satellite images and publicly available photographs. As suggested elsewhere, undertakings and conditions might also be suggested in order to address any concerns.

Operating Centres – Heavy Goods Vehicles

Objections

87. The relevant legislation and case law are set out in detail in the Statutory Guidance above and these Statutory Directions are to be read in conjunction with that Statutory Guidance.
88. In addition, caseworkers are reminded that environmental objections may be made under the provisions of section 12(1) (applications) and section 19 (2)(a) & (4)(a) (variations). Objections are not limited to factors that might result in prejudice to the use or enjoyment of the land in question but may include:
 - noise;
 - fumes;
 - pollution;
 - vibration;
 - visual intrusion.

89. If the objection meets the requirements (i.e. it is properly signed, has been copied to the applicant on the same or next working day after delivery to the traffic commissioner, specifies the grounds on which it is made), the Office of the Traffic Commissioner may write to the objector seeking particulars of any alleged matters. Staff will then usually write on behalf of the traffic commissioner asking for further information about the proposed use of the operating centre and to seek comments on the matters contained in the objection. The applicant and the objector should be encouraged to try to resolve any possible differences between them through direct liaison.
90. The traffic commissioner may decide that they have sufficient information to make an informed decision on the application or may decide to hold a public inquiry to hear evidence from both parties before reaching a decision on the application.¹³³ If the traffic commissioner considers that they have sufficient information to determine the application without a public inquiry the traffic commissioner may advise relevant parties of their intended decision, the parties may also be invited to make further representations in writing or request that the matter is considered at public inquiry.

Representations

91. The relevant legislation and case law are set out in detail in the Statutory Guidance above and these Statutory Directions are to be read in conjunction with that Statutory Guidance.
92. In addition, caseworkers are reminded that the statutory provisions refer to a person who is the owner or occupier of land in the vicinity of any place that might be used as an operating centre. The legislation does not define the term ‘vicinity’ but based on the case law the Senior Traffic Commissioner has determined that a property which might be prejudiced by the following could be said to be within the vicinity:
- Noise – from the applicant’s vehicles moving in and out of and while at, the operating centre. This may be intrusive within the locality bearing in mind the use of other land in the surrounding area and the intended hours of operation;
 - Visual Intrusion – the effect the parking of vehicles at the operating centre may have on the outlook from a representor’s property or land;
 - Vibration – the effect vehicle movements may have, either at the operating centre or on their way in or out of the operating centre;
 - Fumes/Pollution – the effect of fumes from the applicant’s vehicles on the use or enjoyment of property.
93. As the legislation suggests the cause of these grounds must be from the use, or potential use, of the relevant site as an operating centre including where vehicles first join a public road on their way to or from the site. Factors such as the use of the public road network are outside the traffic commissioner’s jurisdiction. A traffic commissioner may consider that some people who respond to an advertisement live too far away from the operating centre to be affected by it and may not as a result accept their representations as valid.

¹³³ See Statutory Guidance and Statutory Directions on Case Management

- 94.** Parish Councils, residents' associations and action groups cannot make representations unless they are owners or occupiers of affected land within the vicinity of an operating centre.¹³⁴ Groups of residents, Parish Councils, or others who cannot be accepted as representors can consider the merit of approaching statutory objectors, such as local authorities, in order to put their case and ask them to consider making an objection.
- 95.** Petitions can only be accepted if it is clear from the face of the petition who is opposing the application, that they accept all the grounds and that they have all signed or a solicitor acting on behalf of the individual has done so. The substance of the petition must be relevant to all signatories and the full name and address (including post code) should be provided for all signatories. The original copy of the petition should be made available to the traffic commissioner. Where a petition is received, members of staff should submit the contents to the traffic commissioner to decide whether it can be treated as valid. The traffic commissioner may direct that each signatory be contacted on an individual basis. If the traffic commissioner decides to proceed with a petition, then the traffic commissioner may also require one person to be nominated as the contact point.
- 96.** The owners and/or occupiers of land or buildings near an operating centre who feel that their use or enjoyment of their own land would be prejudicially affected by the proposed operating centre use can make representations against the grant of an application. For a representation to be treated as valid it must:
- be made in writing to the Office of the Traffic Commissioner address shown in the advertisement. There is no set form, but the grounds must be clearly stated;
 - be made within 21 days of the date the advertisement appeared in the newspaper;
 - be signed. If an individual makes a representation, it must be signed by that person. If it is made by a firm or by a corporate body it must be signed by one or more persons authorised to sign by that group of persons. A solicitor acting on behalf of a representor, be it individual, firm or other group may sign on their behalf;
 - state relevant grounds; and
 - be copied to the applicant on the same day, or next working day, as the representation is made to the traffic commissioner.
- 97.** A representation cannot be treated as valid unless the above requirements have been met, or the traffic commissioner is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances to justify accepting the representations. Examples might include where the owner or occupier of a relevant property has been away from their property for the period of the advert, but the traffic commissioner may seek evidence of this absence
- 98.** An applicant should be clear as to what information might be relied upon in opposition to its application. Representations should be acknowledged and, where it is necessary to determine whether the criteria have been met, supplementary information may be sought. Representors should be clear as to whether their opposition is being treated as a valid representation and that they

¹³⁴ [2004/202 David Holloway](#)

may therefore be involved in future consultation on the application. The applicant will normally be asked for his views on the matters raised by any representors and, where appropriate, he will be asked to liaise directly with representors to see if any differences can be resolved without formal intervention by the traffic commissioner. As suggested above the traffic commissioner may also ask for a DVSA traffic examiner to visit and report on the proposed operating centre.

- 99.** The traffic commissioner will then consider if he/she needs to hold a public inquiry to hear the evidence of both sides (i.e. applicant and objectors and/or representors) before reaching a decision or whether the traffic commissioner has sufficient evidence to make a decision. If it is decided to hear the application at a public inquiry the valid representors will be invited to attend to put their case. If the decision can be made on the basis of the written evidence, then Office of the Traffic Commissioner staff will be responsible for advising all relevant parties of the outcome. Waiting for responses from the parties can take some time and it is therefore important that members of staff acting on behalf of the traffic commissioner keep the parties appropriately and accurately informed of developments. It is important that parties do not go to unnecessary expense in addressing opposition where a decision on say the validity of an objector or representor has already been taken.
- 100.** In cases where an applicant has had to re-advertise the traffic commissioner may determine that a representor should respond to the new advert particularly where there has been a change so that the traffic commissioner can be satisfied that their opposition is being pursued. Similarly, representors may be required to pursue their opposition by responding to correspondence sent on behalf of the traffic commissioner. If they fail to do so the traffic commissioner is entitled to infer that they have decided not to continue with their opposition.
- 101.** Any case submission to a traffic commissioner should take account of the above and should seek to differentiate between the information which is valid as a representation and that which falls outside the scope allowed to representors and/or the traffic commissioner's jurisdiction. Whilst assessing suitability under section 13 the legislation does not restrict the traffic commissioner to those considerations set out at section 21. The case law does indicate that where planning and highway authorities have chosen not to become involved, the traffic commissioner should ignore planning or other objections in the absence of the appropriate authority. It is for a Highways Authority to decide whether a public highway is suitable and/or safe for any particular use and the traffic commissioner's jurisdiction is therefore limited.
- 102.** Anyone who has made a representation should be advised in writing of the date, time and venue of the Inquiry and be invited to attend. They must be given at least 21 days' notice and be asked to confirm in writing whether or not they will be attending.

Adverts

- 103.** These directions are to be read in conjunction with the Statutory Guidance set out above. As a starting point, advertisements placed in the local newspaper where planning applications for the locality are published will be deemed to meet the requirements of section 11(2) of the 1995 Act. The circulation figures of local newspapers indicate that a smaller percentage of the population buy local

newspapers in urban areas than in rural areas and consequently where there is a concern that the statutory intention may not be met the matter is to be referred to the traffic commissioner. However, the Senior Traffic Commissioner notes that advertisements in rural newspapers with an apparently low circulation may be as effective as newspapers with an apparently high readership in urban areas. In some areas regional newspapers have ceased producing a hard copy in favour of on-line publications to which residents now subscribe.

- 104.** The effect of this is that whilst the Senior Traffic Commissioner cannot prescribe circulation levels the statutory intention must still be met. The onus is on the applicant to demonstrate that they have advertised in a suitable newspaper which achieves the statutory intention thereby allowing local residents the opportunity to make representations. Evidence of newspaper publication should be in the form of the original full page of the newspaper containing the advertisement. In the case of digital applications electronic copies of that evidence can be uploaded, however traffic commissioners and staff acting on their behalf reserve the right to request the original document. Applicants who take advantage of the digital service should retain the original advertisement and/or correspondence from the newspaper publisher, which confirms the date and text of the advert and that the advert has been paid for, throughout the period of the application.

Conditions

- 105.** The traffic commissioner will consider all valid objections and representations received, as well as any other relevant information known about the proposed operating centre and the applicant before making a decision on the application. On making a decision the traffic commissioner may grant the application as applied for, with modifications, and/or he/she can attach conditions, or refuse the application. If the traffic commissioner decides to grant the application, he or she can impose those conditions which he or she considers necessary to:

- prevent or reduce adverse environmental effects; and/or
- prevent authorised vehicles causing danger to the public at any point where vehicles first join a public road on their way to and from an operating centre, and on any private approach road.

- 106.** Conditions might cover:

- the number, type and size of authorised vehicles, including trailers, kept at the operating centre for maintenance or parking;
- the parking arrangements for authorised vehicles, including trailers, at or in the vicinity of the operating centre;
- the times when the centre may be used for maintenance or movement of authorised vehicles;
- how authorised vehicles enter and leave the operating centre.

- 107.** It is an offence to breach licence conditions and an operator faces criminal penalties in the Magistrates' or Sheriff Court if it does so. Conditions on the use of an operating centre can apply only to the licence holder concerned and the use of vehicles authorised under the licence. A traffic commissioner cannot place restrictions on any vehicles which are visiting the site or are using it for other purposes. However, the site might be subject to wider restrictions, for instance

Transport for London's code of practice for quieter out-of-hours deliveries¹³⁵ and the DfT quiet deliveries good practice guidance¹³⁶, which might be relevant to the determination.

Complaints about Existing Operating Centres

108. In addition to the ability of a traffic commissioner to review a licence where the operator is said to be operating outside the terms of that licence, a traffic commissioner has the opportunity to review the suitability of an operating centre where:

- an operator applies to vary the use of an operating centre;
- or at five yearly intervals, for example if local residents have made complaints within the last 5 years.

109. The traffic commissioner has powers to take action at any time if a licence holder is operating outside the terms of his licence, for example by breaking any condition of use that appears on the operator's licence.¹³⁷

110. Complaints against an operating centre can be received at any time. In general, these are about the use of an existing operating centre or about breaches of any of the conditions or other restrictions under which a licence was issued. A complaint about an operating centre which is specified on a goods vehicle operator's licence can be on either environmental or road safety grounds.

111. Traffic commissioners require complaints to be made in writing and should:

- state who the complaint is from;
- state the grounds for complaint; and
- identify the operating centre concerned and, wherever possible, give the full address of the operating centre and the name(s) of the operator(s) using the operating centre to which the complaint relates, and if relevant, details of the vehicles, and movements giving cause for concern.

112. Members of staff in the Office of the Traffic Commissioner should acknowledge receipt of a complaint. The person making the complaint should be sent information about the complaints procedure and may be asked to complete a pro-forma in order to obtain sufficient information to supply to the traffic commissioner. The relevant part of the form must be copied to the operator(s) concerned with an invitation to comment on the matters raised. This may also allow an opportunity for the operator to rectify any problems. The traffic commissioner may allow the parties the opportunity to resolve any problems between themselves. Further complaints can be received from the same person at any time leading up to the review date. Complainants must be advised of the next review date and should be informed of the traffic commissioner's decision at that time.

113. Complaints must be registered against the relevant operator's licence. If the complaint does not allege operation outside the terms of his licence it must be filed and considered during the review stage. In the meantime, if an operator

¹³⁵ www.tfl.gov.uk

¹³⁶ www.gov.uk/government/publications/quiet-deliveries-demonstration-scheme

¹³⁷ See Statutory Guidance and Statutory Directions on the Principles of Decision making

applies to vary his licence in a way which would impact on the operating centre the operator will have to advertise his intentions in the local press and complainants may make representations against the grant of the variation.

Review of Operating Centres

- 114.** The traffic commissioner may, but is not obliged, to conduct a review of an operating centre every five years commencing with the date when the goods vehicle operator's licence came into force. The review is not automatic and is at the traffic commissioner's discretion. In reaching that decision the traffic commissioner should be referred to any complaints received against an operating centre in the preceding five years.
- 115.** Members of staff should write to any person who has made a complaint against an operating centre during the review stage and in advance of the review date to ask for an update and request whether the complainant wishes to pursue their concerns.
- 116.** The traffic commissioner will consider the evidence summarised in a case submission and decide whether a review is justified. It is therefore important that members of staff ensure the accuracy of the submission and, by reference to the legislation and any relevant case law, their recommendation. They should communicate the decision to any complainant who has pursued their concerns.
- 117.** In conducting a review of an operating centre, the traffic commissioner will consider:
- whether the operating centre continues to be suitable for the purposes for which the operator's licence allows it to be used;
 - on the basis that it is no longer suitable, whether conditions could be attached or changed which would make it suitable; or
 - whether it is incapable of being made suitable by the imposition or changing of such conditions.
- 118.** As this suggests, on review of an operating centre the traffic commissioner might attach conditions or vary existing conditions for environmental reasons, such as the times vehicles use the operating centre, or for non-environmental reasons, such as road safety. The traffic commissioner might also take account of any undertakings offered. The traffic commissioner can also remove an operating centre from a licence for environmental grounds, but only in limited circumstances on the grounds of the adverse effects of the parking of the operator's vehicles, or for non-environmental reasons.

Shared Sites

- 119.** Traffic commissioners need to be able to easily locate operators. This can be made more difficult where multiple operators share the same site. Traffic commissioners will accept a parking plan which clearly indicates where the vehicles on the applicant's licence will park and where vehicles belonging to other operators park. It must also make it clear that the parking spaces to be used by the applicant/operator are reserved for their use. A failure to provide this type of plan with sufficient detail to confirm availability, will mean that the application must fail and the applicant/operator will have to re-advertise the application.

- 120.** An applicant needs to demonstrate that there is sufficient capacity at the operating centre for safety checks to be carried out before the vehicle enters the public highway. Where there are multiple operators using the same site, staff will review the allocation of parking against the information held about the site to determine whether the current authorisation exceeds the available capacity.

Transfer of Operating Centre(s)

- 121.** An applicant for a licence or an existing operator can apply to a traffic commissioner under Schedule 4 to the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Act 1995 to allow an operating centre to be transferred from one licence (the donor licence) to another (the receiving 'donee' licence). Operating centres must not be on a licence other than that of the donor. Where the operating centre is a shared site, a traffic commissioner will accept a sufficiently detailed parking plan as directed above, but in the absence of details to confirm availability, the applicant will be required to place an advertisement.
- 122.** If the traffic commissioner agrees to the request, there is no need to advertise the application in a local newspaper. It is also not possible for local residents to make representations or for statutory objections to be made on the basis of environmental suitability, a statutory objector may however make an objection that any of the requirements of sections 13A to 13D are not satisfied.

Process

- 123.** In the first instance staff must check to see if the requirements of Schedule 4 have been met and in particular:
- the operating centres to be transferred are all on the same licence(s), which must be a valid "live" licence(s);
 - the operating centres to be transferred are not on any other licence. (Applications sometimes adopt a mixture; any that are not on the donor licence(s) must be the subject of a separate application);
 - the application must not exceed the current level of authority (i.e. the same number or less of vehicles and, if applicable, trailers as are currently authorised at the operating centre under the donor licence(s));
 - the accompanying application form only includes the operating centres for which a direction under Schedule 4 is sought;
 - that the donor licence(s) will be surrendered or the operating centre(s) in question will be removed from the donor licence(s) and that there is therefore an alternative;
 - that the application form is signed by both a person authorised on behalf of the applicant and a person authorised to sign on behalf of the donor.
- 124.** Staff must then check to see if the operating centres have any conditions or undertakings attached to them. If they do, the applicant or operator must accept them in their entirety. Checks must be made to see if the operating centres on the donor licence have any complaints recorded against them or if there is any history of environmental opposition either at the site in question or at neighbouring operating centres within such proximity to the operating centre that the traffic commissioner might consider those matters to be relevant to determination of the application.

125. The review date of the donor licence must be identified.

Determining Factors

126. If all the administrative requirements above have been met members of staff will submit the application to the traffic commissioner for a decision. It is at the traffic commissioner's discretion whether to issue a direction under Schedule 4. Where all criteria are met, the decision to approve Schedule 4 may be delegated to a Team Leader level.¹³⁸ Where the applicant can demonstrate, from established and unopposed use of an operating centre that potential representors will not be prejudiced, the traffic commissioner may extend the review date beyond three years.

127. A decision to refuse a Schedule 4 application must always be referred to the traffic commissioner. The traffic commissioner may not be minded to allow an application which does not require an advert (intended to alert local residents and allow them to voice any opposition) where representation(s), objection(s) or complaint(s) have been received against either the operating centre being applied for, or any other operating centre within the vicinity.

128. Staff should write to the applicant/operator within 7 days of their having received the traffic commissioner's decision. There will be one of three outcomes:

- the application has been accepted; or
- Schedule 4 does not apply and the application must be advertised; or
- the traffic commissioner has declined to issue a direction under Schedule 4 and the application must be advertised.

129. Where the application to invoke the provisions of Schedule 4 is refused, the date of the application being received will be taken as the date of the traffic commissioner's decision (i.e. the first point at which the application could be processed), so as to allow the applicant the opportunity to advertise notice of the application.

Address for Service, Correspondence and Contact (Goods and PSV)

130. Operators are obliged as a condition on the operator's licence to supply and keep up to date the correspondence address to be used by and on behalf of the traffic commissioner. It might be possible to make further enquiries, but the traffic commissioner is under no obligation to do so and operators who fail to meet this basic administrative requirement are responsible for any consequences.

131. A traffic commissioner must be satisfied that, on the balance of probabilities, an operator has received relevant correspondence. Whilst further evidence that a notice has been received might be obtained from the postal system, it is not a requirement. As with the courts and tribunals, where correspondence has been sent to the specified address (below) this will be considered good service, unless shown to the contrary.¹³⁹ The following means will be deemed to be good service:

¹³⁸ See Statutory Guidance and Statutory Directions on the Delegation of Authority

¹³⁹ Conjoined [2021/504 Andrew Hopkins](#) and [2021/553 Tonna Luxury Coaches Ltd](#)

Type of letter	Delivery method
Request explanation letter (REL)	Electronically via Vehicle Operator Licensing self-service or email
Warning letter / NFA letter	Electronically via Vehicle Operator Licensing self-service or email
Propose to revoke (PTR) letter	Recorded delivery to correspondence address and electronically via Vehicle Operator Licensing self-service or email
Decision to revoke a licence under PTR procedures	Recorded delivery to correspondence address and Electronically via Vehicle Operator Licensing self-service or email
STL interview call up letters	First class post to correspondence address and electronically via Vehicle Operator Licensing self-service or email
STL interview decision letters	First class post to correspondence address and electronically via Vehicle Operator Licensing self-service or email
Preliminary hearing call up letters	First class post to correspondence address and electronically via Vehicle Operator Licensing self-service or email
Preliminary hearing decision letters	First class post to correspondence address and electronically via Vehicle Operator Licensing self-service or email
Operator and transport manager Public Inquiry / Impounding call up letters	Recorded delivery to correspondence address
	Electronically via Vehicle Operator Licensing self-service or email
Briefs to operator / transport manager / DTC	Electronically via case bundling service or recorded delivery to correspondence address
Supplementary letters	Electronically via Vehicle Operator Licensing self-service or email unless additional documents are required to be sent, in which case first class post to be used
Public Inquiry / Impounding / Stay decision letters	Recorded delivery to correspondence address
	Electronically via Vehicle Operator Licensing self-service or email
Section 9 / Section 43 statements	First class post unless email service is available
General correspondence	Electronically via Vehicle Operator Licensing self-service or email
Driver call-up letters	First class post to correspondence address or email

Driver decision letters	First class post to correspondence address or email
Upper Tribunal appeal papers	Filed electronically ¹⁴⁰ or exceptionally by Royal Mail Special Delivery
Upper Tribunal general correspondence	First class post or email

N.B: Where a VOL self-service account or an email address are not available, electronic service should be substituted by a letter sent by first class post. In most cases documents will be served electronically either through Vehicle Operator Licensing self-service or by email.¹⁴¹

- 132.** Members of staff are expected to keep a contemporaneous note of any substantive contact with an operator or applicant. Where there is an attempt to convey important information then members of staff should ask the operator or applicant to put this in writing and that request should be logged. Where changes come to light as a result of the self-service function or through other contact, again this should be followed up in correspondence.
- 133.** When an operator fails to respond to a letter, which has properly been served, proposing action against a licence or to refuse an application then the action forewarned in the letter may then be taken.
- 134.** It is desirable to give operators as much notice of public inquiries as possible.¹⁴² In some cases call-up letters may be sent so as to be received by the recipients 35 days (and no later than 28 days) before the scheduled date for the public inquiry. In complex cases as much notice as possible should be given. However, it is recognised that this is not always possible, but it is incumbent on caseworkers to ensure that at least the statutory 21 days' notice period is observed.¹⁴³ The date, time and place may be varied provided at least 21 days' notice is again given. Seven days' notice should be given where a public inquiry commences and is subsequently adjourned.¹⁴⁴ Where there is an irregularity in the giving of notice, the Traffic Commissioner may nevertheless proceed with the inquiry as if notice had been duly given provided s/he is satisfied that no injustice or inconvenience would be caused, for example, where all attendees waive their notice rights.
- 135.** The call up letter should be sent electronically with a copy by recorded delivery. The letter should detail the reasons for calling the public inquiry, the evidence that the traffic commissioner will consider and any further information that the traffic commissioner requires from the operator. If the operator does not respond and does not attend the public inquiry it will be for the presiding commissioner to determine if the inquiry can proceed but operators should expect traffic commissioners to proceed on the basis that there was good service.

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.judiciary.uk/guidance-and-resources/ut-administrative-appeals-chamber-electronic-filing-of-documents-online-ce-file/>

¹⁴¹ A summary of how documents are served via the Vehicle Operator Licence service was provided to the Upper Tribunal in [2023/1389 RW Gent Ltd](#)

¹⁴² [2015/046 Raymond Borkowski](#)

¹⁴³ Schedule 4 of The Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Regulations 1995

¹⁴⁴ [2009/524 Ocean Transport Ltd](#)

136. Each legal entity invited to an inquiry should ideally receive a separate letter. The letter, however, must clearly detail which licences are being considered by the traffic commissioner.
137. The letter to a limited company should be addressed to 'The Director(s)'. In the case of a partnership the letter must be addressed to all the named partners on the letter. It is not necessary to send separate letters to each partner as partners have a fiduciary duty to one another meaning that they should advise each partner of the contents. Where an operator has specified a FAO contact, letters will instead be addressed to that contact. As with changes to the correspondence address, an operator remains responsible for notifying of any change to the FAO contact and must ensure correspondence will be received by that contact. In the case of a multiple licence holder only one letter covering all licences held is required.
138. Where a public inquiry is heard on environmental grounds a letter should be sent to each valid representor and objector inviting them to attend the inquiry. The letter should include all relevant evidence that the traffic commissioner intends to consider at the hearing.
139. The general practice in the first instance is to send all correspondence electronically. If electronic communication in Vehicle Operator Licensing self-service is not promptly opened, a copy is dispatched by post. Save in exceptional circumstances and where authorised by the traffic commissioner all evidence should also be sent to the 'proper address' rather than the nominated representative. It is for the relevant party to make arrangements for that representative to receive copies.

Use of Advisers' Contact Addresses for Operators

140. In the past some transport consultants have requested that all correspondence relating to their client operators be sent to the consultant's address and as a consequence, neither the traffic commissioners nor the staff in the Office of the Traffic Commissioner have a correct postal or email address for correspondence for an operator or a transport manager. As a result, it may be that an operator or transport manager will not receive essential correspondence such as a calling-in letter or a warning letter from the Office of the Traffic Commissioner. This former practice also does not sit well with the requirement for standard licence holders to have a stable establishment in accordance with paragraph A1 of Schedule 3 of the 1995 Act and Regulation (EC) 1071/2009.
141. This practice is therefore no longer acceptable and, regardless of whether an operator (or applicant) is legally represented or represented by a transport consultant, the operator's (applicant's) own correspondence address should always be obtained and recorded to enable the operator (applicant) to be contacted directly at that address. This will minimise the possibility of an operator (applicant) not receiving essential correspondence, particularly where a solicitor or transport consultant is no longer instructed by the operator (applicant). Where existing advisers still use their own business address (including email) as an operator's sole correspondence address this will be indicated in VOL, they should

be required to supply a separate correspondence address for the operator to the relevant team in the Office of the Traffic Commissioner within a given deadline.¹⁴⁵

- 142.** A previous practice developed whereby some advisers who represent applicants for operator licences or existing operators request that all papers for a hearing be sent to the office address of the adviser. That practice has been stopped. Where a request is received from an adviser who is not a practicing lawyer to send all correspondence to them, copies of correspondence will only be sent to the adviser upon written confirmation from the operator/applicant that the adviser is instructed to act on their behalf. Where they request that correspondence be sent to their advisers (whether practicing lawyers or not) duplicate copies of correspondence will not be sent directly to the operator. It is for the operator to ensure that representatives have the required information.

Use of PO boxes for Correspondence

- 143.** The use of Post Office (PO) boxes is excluded from the application forms. A PO Box can never be a suitable address to meet the requirement on a standard licence for a stable establishment.¹⁴⁶ In the exceptional event that an application is made for an operator to have a PO Box as a correspondence address this must be referred to the traffic commissioner.

¹⁴⁵ See Vehicle Operator Licensing Service Terms and Conditions - <https://www.vehicle-operator-licensing.service.gov.uk/terms-and-conditions/>

¹⁴⁶ Once the amendments from the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 to the Companies Act 2006 come into force, companies will be required to supply a registered email address and will not be able to use a PO Box as their registered office address

ANNEX 1 - RETAINED EU LEGISLATION

Regulation 5 of the Road Transport Operator Regulations 2011 states that a standard licence constitutes an authorisation to engage in the occupation of road transport operator for the purposes of:

Regulation (EC) No 1071/2009 establishing common rules concerning conditions to be complied with to pursue the occupation of road transport operator repealed Council Directive 96/26 EC and applicable from 4th December 2011

Article 3 - Requirements for engagement in the occupation of road transport operator

Undertakings engaged in the occupation of road transport operator shall:

(a) have an effective and stable establishment in a Member State;

Article 5 - Conditions relating to the requirement of establishment

1. In order to satisfy the requirement laid down in Article 3(1)(a), an undertaking that engages in the occupation of road passenger transport operator must:

(a) have an establishment situated in the United Kingdom with premises in which it keeps its core business documents, in particular its accounting documents, personnel management documents, documents containing data relating to driving time and rest and any other document to which the competent authority must have access in order to verify compliance with the conditions laid down in this Regulation. The Minister may require that establishments also have other documents available at their premises at any time;

(b) once an authorisation is granted, have at its disposal one or more vehicles which are registered or otherwise put into circulation whether those vehicles are wholly owned or, for example, held under a hire-purchase agreement or a hire or leasing contract;

(c) conduct effectively and continuously with the necessary administrative equipment its operations concerning the vehicles mentioned in point (b) and with the appropriate technical equipment and facilities at an operating centre situated in the United Kingdom.

2. In order to satisfy the requirement laid down in Article 3(1)(a), an undertaking that engages in the occupation of road haulage operator must satisfy the requirements set out in:

(a) if the undertaking is established in Great Britain, paragraph A1 of Schedule 3 to the 1995 Act; or

(b) if the undertaking is established in Northern Ireland, any regulations made for the purposes of section 12A(2)(a) of the 2010 Act.

Article 13 - Procedure for the suspension and withdrawal of authorisations

1. Where a competent authority establishes that an undertaking runs the risk of no longer fulfilling the requirements laid down in Article 3, it shall notify the undertaking thereof. Where a competent authority establishes that one or more of those requirements is no longer satisfied, it may set one of the following time limits for the undertaking to rectify the situation:

(b) a time limit not exceeding 6 months where the undertaking has to rectify the situation by demonstrating that it has an effective and stable establishment;

3. If the competent authority establishes that the undertaking no longer satisfies one or more of the requirements laid down in Article 3, it shall suspend or withdraw the authorisation to engage in the occupation of road transport operator within the time limits referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article.