Lincolnshire
COUNTY COUNCIL

Road Classification Policy for Lincolnshire

Background

1.   Road classification in Great Britain dates back to the 1920s and was originally used as a way of allocating grants for road maintenance and improvement (although this is no longer the case). However, over the years it has developed into a way of ensuring that there is a logical, consistent road network across the country.

2.   Excluding motorways, all UK roads fall into one of four classifications:

- **A Roads** – major roads providing large scale transport links within and between urban areas

- **B Roads** – roads intended to connect lesser areas and connect A roads to smaller roads on the network

- **Classified Unnumbered** – smaller roads intended to connect together unclassified roads (see below) with A and B roads, often linking a housing estate or village to the rest of the network. Although called "classified unnumbered" in statute, most local authorities refer to these as "C Roads" and have developed their own numbering system.

- **Unclassified** – The remainder of the highway network, typically local roads carrying local traffic such as residential estate roads or minor rural roads serving small settlements or individual farms.

3.   These four classes of road form a hierarchy. Large volumes of traffic and traffic travelling longer distances should typically be using the higher classes of road, whilst smaller volumes of more local traffic should be using the lower classes of road. However, there is no fixed relationship between the various classes of road and traffic flows carried. In general, the higher classes of road will carry more traffic than the lower, but the situation will vary depending on the context. For example, a rural B road may well carry less traffic than a classified unnumbered road in urban areas. Similarly there is no minimum capacity or width associated with each class or level of maintenance (the latter being set by the maintenance hierarchy).

4.   Hence, the classification of a road reflects its strategic importance in the local network, rather than the number of vehicles it carries or its width. Currently, the national road network comprises the following:

Classification	Kilometres	Miles	%
Motorway	3,569	2,218	0.9%
A Roads	46,724	29,039	11.8%
B Roads	30,201	18,770	7.7%
C Roads	84,814	52,712	21.5%
Unclassified Roads	228,904	142,265	58.1%
Total	**394,212**	**245,004**	

Source : Department for Transport – GB 2011

5. From April 2012, central government handed over greater responsibility to local highway authorities for the management of the roads classification system and the Primary Route Network (PRN). While authorities had previously done the majority of the work involved in reclassifying a road, they always needed to secure the agreement of the Department for Transport (DfT). Under the new approach, authorities are allowed to exercise this power without the need for central approval.

6. Under the new system, local highway authorities assumed new responsibilities, namely:

    - the authority will manage all local classification and PRN decisions, ensuring that the network is adequately signed;

    - the authority must consult with neighbouring highway authorities (including the Highways Agency) where relevant;

    - the authority must keep records and inform the National Street Gazetteer, Ordnance Survey and DfT of any changes;

    - the authority should be prepared to explain its decisions if challenged, in case of appeal.

7. However, the Secretary of State retains ultimate legal responsibility for road classification and the PRN, and retains the right to intervene if necessary.

8. To assist local highway authorities in their new role, DfT published the document "Guidance on Road Classification and the Primary Route Network" in January 2012. This guidance forms the basis of this document.

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9. As a large, rural shire county, Lincolnshire's highway network totals some 8,905 kilometres or 5,534 miles, the 5th longest highway network of all local highway authorities in England. The table below shows the breakdown of the current classifications at 1st April 2012.

Classification	Kilometres	Miles	%
Trunk Roads	62	38	0.7%
A Roads	1,046	650	11.7%
B Roads	789	490	8.9%
C Roads	2,933	1,823	32.9%
Unclassified Roads	4,075	2,533	45.8%
Total	**8,905**	**5,534**	

10. The need for new or revised road classifications arise in various ways but are most commonly due to :

    * the construction of new road schemes (e.g. bypasses),

    * a change of role due to new traffic management systems, or

    * very occasionally, existing inconsistencies that need addressing

11. In deciding the appropriate classification to be applied to a road in Lincolnshire, the starting point will be the general descriptions of each level of classification as provided in the DfT's Guidance and set out in Paragraph 2 above. More specifically, the following points will be considered :

    * the strategic role the road plays in moving people and goods from one location to another. This will vary in context, particular between rural and urban areas.

    * the general level of traffic and proportion of goods vehicles that the road is carrying (or expected to carry in the case of new roads)

    * any wider traffic management routeing strategies in the vicinity

    * the standard and classification of other nearby roads

12.   In the absence of clear reasons otherwise, the default state of a road will be unclassified.

Making Decisions

13.   Responsibility for managing the classification of roads is covered under the Council's Scheme of Authorisation for Officers, with powers delegated to :

- Assistant Director (Highways and Transportation)
- Heads of Service (Highways and Transportation)
- Transport Manager (Policy and Orders)

14.   In order to establish what changes are necessary, discussions will take place internally involving :

- the relevant Head of Highways,
- the Transport Manager (Policy and Orders), and
- the appropriate Project Manager in the case of new highway or traffic management proposals

15.   If agreement cannot be reached, then the Assistant Director (Highways and Transportation) will make the final decision.

16.   Should the proposals have any cross-border implications, then the appropriate adjacent highway authorities will also be consulted prior to nay decision being taken. Similarly, should there be any implications for the national Trunk Road network, discussions will be held with the Highways Agency. Changes to roads classification do not require public consultation or advertisement.

Appeals

17.   As highlighted earlier, the Secretary of State retains ultimate power over roads classification. In the case of disputes over the classification of a road, affected parties may appeal to the Department for Transport for a ruling. This applies both to local authorities concerned with the actions of their neighbours, and to members of the public who are concerned about an authority's decisions.

18.   Where there is a dispute, the Department will expect interested parties to attempt to reconcile the matter through discussion at a local level. The highway authority will be expected to provide justification for its changes and compliance with this Policy will form the basis of any such justification.

19.   The DfT appeals procedure is not intended to challenge the status of existing classification, and will only apply to changes after April 2012. Nor, is it intended to challenge classifications that have been in force for more than twelve months, other than in exceptional circumstances.

Record Keeping

20. All changes to road classifications (once active) will be included in the authority's monthly update to the National Street Gazetteer as required under the DfT Guidance.

21. In addition, the appropriate forms and maps will be forwarded to Geoplace who are responsible for forwarding these to DfT, Ordnance Survey and other interested parties. In addition, all relevant groups within Highways and Transportation will be notified of any changes.

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