

A Gateway to Northern Devon – the Strategy for the A361 & A39

Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendation: That Cabinet:

- (a) notes this report and attached North Devon Link Road (NDLR) strategy leaflet;**
- (b) agrees that further work be undertaken on the engineering feasibility of the strategy and the development of specific schemes; and**
- (c) agrees the leaflet for consultation with Local Members and other Stakeholders.**

1. Summary

This report and accompanying leaflet is to inform Cabinet on the progress of the strategy to improve the A361/A39 route from the M5 to Northern Devon and Bideford and is proposed to be made publically available for consultation with Local Members and other stakeholders.

2. Background/Introduction

The A361/A39 corridor between Bideford and the M5 forms the principal road connection between Northern Devon, M5 and the strategic rail network at Tiverton Parkway. It is one of the few remaining stretches of strategic highway, identified in the Local Transport Plan (LTP), which comes under Devon County Council's direct responsibility; the remainder being the responsibility of the Highways Agency. As such, Devon County Council has the responsibility to maintain and improve it as needed, and by doing so creating a "Gateway to Northern Devon". This is in tandem with improving rail access via the Tarka Line from Exeter St Davids to Barnstaple.

The A361/A39 carries business users, commuters and tourists and as such suffers from journey time reliability and congestion, particularly in the summer peaks. This is not made easier by the number and variety of type of junctions which act as pinch points along the route, often delaying traffic back along the main road. There is considerable employment and housing development planned along the route over the next 15-20 years, with 2000 dwellings at Tiverton, 1100 at South Molton, 5300 at Barnstaple and 3800 in the Bideford area, with smaller levels elsewhere at locations such as 1550 at Ilfracombe, 340 at Braunton and 470 in Torrington. The particular pressure points on the network are around Barnstaple, between Barnstaple and South Molton and in the Tiverton area.

3. Proposal

In order to enhance the journey experienced on the route, a strategy to improve various junctions and road stretches is being developed. This strategy is laid out in the leaflet "Gateway to Northern Devon – A Strategy for the North Devon Link Road". It has been designed to give information to the public and councillors and to answer questions that they may have about the route. It outlines proposals for various junctions, as well as sections which could benefit from extra lanes.

It is proposed that the leaflet will be distributed amongst councillors in Torridge, North and Mid-Devon, who can then at their discretion make it available to the public. In addition, a digital version would be made available online for public viewing. It is anticipated that some questions may arise from the leaflet, with queries being dealt with as and when required.

It is important to note that this leaflet does not set out the definitive and final approach to the link road improvements. The proposals outlined in the leaflet should be regarded as having strong potential with some flexibility where necessary. The first phase of confirmed works is Roundswell Roundabout which started in January 2014 and is partially funded through the Government's Local Pinch Point Fund.

The initial adoption of the strategy will allow further work to be commissioned on options at different locations. This will involve investigation of alternatives to junction layouts and potential widening on some stretches. Design work has been progressed on a number of the other junctions along the route over the last 2-3 years using LTP funding.

The Heart of South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in conjunction with the Local Transport Board (LTB) is a key partner both in developing the vision for the route linked to its Strategic Economic Plan to 2030 and the case for funding for future improvements through its Growth Deal with Government. Four schemes on the route, Heywood Road roundabout (Bideford), Roundswell Phase 2 (Barnstaple), Portmore to Landkey Phase 1 (Barnstaple) and Tiverton Eastern Urban Extension Access are included in the LEP's 2015/16 to 2020/21 Growth Deal proposals to Government, the first three for funding in 2015/16. Other A361 schemes would be considered for funding in the 2021 – 2026 period or may be achieved earlier from other sources including Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) / Section 106.

The strategy for the A361 and A39 will be used to inform emerging development proposals through the Local Plans to create a high quality route to the northern Devon sub region, further enhancing opportunities for economic growth. This can in turn be used in the planning system to ensure any further connections to the route are future proofed so that they are not detrimental to achieving the longer term strategy.

The A39/A361 corridor forms an important connection with main line rail services to London, Bristol and Birmingham at Tiverton Parkway for which reliable journey times are essential. The Tarka rail line between Barnstaple and Exeter - with over half a million journeys a year compared to 6 million by road - is also an important part of the access strategy to and from northern Devon including interchange to bus connections across the area at Barnstaple station. The strategy for the route is part of the Devon Metro strategy for rail services focussed on Exeter. The County Council is working with Network Rail, First Great Western and other partners to plan improvements to stations, interchanges, rolling stock capacity and quality and journey times to offer an attractive alternative to the A361 for some journeys.

4. Consultations/Representations/Technical Data

This leaflet is the first stage of an informal consultation for improvement options along the length of the A361/A39 route. Individual schemes would be subject to wider and more detailed consultation including the LTB prioritisation process and subsequently local consultation for detailed scheme design.

5. Financial Considerations

The adoption of the Strategy supports the case for further engineering feasibility work to be carried out to develop individual schemes. This will be funded from the LTP allocation from the Department for Transport (DfT) as agreed by Cabinet at its July 2013 meeting.

Funding for the actual construction costs of the individual projects would, if progressed to full schemes, potentially be from a variety of sources including developer contributions and the Local Growth Fund through the LEP. As noted above a number of schemes have been submitted to the Government via the LTB and LEP for funding in the 2015/16 to 2020/21 period. The strategy is likely to require DCC funding to prepare business cases, designs and acquire land for schemes to be delivered through further LEP Growth Deals from 2021 onwards.

The Government is expected to announce the outcome of LEP Growth Deals for 2015/16 in July 2014. It is anticipated that a report will be brought to Cabinet in autumn 2014 with a proposed 2015/16 scheme programme once the LEP and LTB have confirmed individual scheme allocations.

6. Environmental Impact Considerations

Detailed environmental studies will be carried out as part of the design work for each scheme and submitted in planning applications or other approvals as required where these are necessary.

It should be noted that some sections of the route such as Rackenford are close, or adjacent to designated sites with varying levels of environmental protection. Some sites may be affected by increased traffic levels even if improvements are not planned in the immediate vicinity.

7. Equality Considerations

Where relevant to the decision, the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision makers to give due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

Taking account of age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), gender and gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women/ new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage/civil partnership status in coming to a decision, a decision maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation or socio-economic disadvantage. This may be achieved, for example, through completing a full Equality Impact Needs Assessment/Impact Assessment or other form of options/project management appraisal that achieves the same objective.

At this early stage of the process, the County Council is seeking views from a wide range of people on the suggestions in the leaflet and there will be opportunities for people to view the information and respond to the consultation online (by email). Recognising that many people may not have internet access or may prefer to receive or respond to the consultation in an alternative format, there will be an opportunity to request this by phone or in writing, as detailed on the leaflet. Information will also be provided in local libraries and through press releases to ensure that people have access to the consultation material. Following the outcomes of the consultation, further Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out for individual schemes as and when the schemes are worked up in more detail.

8. Legal Considerations

There are no specific legal considerations at this stage. They will be considered in future reports on individual schemes.

9. Risk Management Considerations

All risk management considerations will be taken into account when detailed scheme designs are produced.

10. Public Health Impact

The air quality in locations near dwellings may need to be modelled as part of scheme development including the indirect impact of any increased traffic levels on roads linking to the A361 / A39. Opportunities to improve options for increasing levels of physical activity through walking and cycling, for example better crossing facilities will be considered in the detailed design stage.

11. Options/Alternatives

One alternative is not to develop a strategy for this road. This would be a reactive approach to the future challenges associated with growth along the route and would potentially weaken the County Council's chances of securing funding to address future impacts. A strategy is a more proactive approach and would enable design teams to progress schemes and put the county council in a stronger position to influence decision-makers and draw down funding from future LEP programmes.

The leaflet has identified sections of route where individual interventions may be needed in the future. The possibility of providing a dual carriageway along the full length of the route was considered but the estimated cost of this is likely to be in excess of £400m, which is unlikely to be deliverable within the new LEP funding landscape.

12. Reason for Recommendation/Conclusion

There is a need to develop a strategy for the future improvement of the North Devon Link Road in order to facilitate economic growth and the delivery of the Local Plan proposals for new housing and employment along the corridor. This consultation leaflet sets out a framework for the development of a series of interventions which will include road and junction improvements. The proposals which are outlined should be viewed as having strong potential with flexibility where necessary.

Dave Black
Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

Electoral Divisions: Willand and Uffculme; Tiverton East; Tiverton West; South Molton Rural; Chumleigh and Swimbridge; Barnstaple North; Barnstaple South; Fremmington Rural; Northam; Bideford East; Bideford South and Hartland.

Cabinet Member for Economy, Growth and Cabinet Liaison for Exeter: Councillor Andrew Leadbetter

Strategic Director, Place: Heather Barnes

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Contact for enquiries: Stuart Jarvis

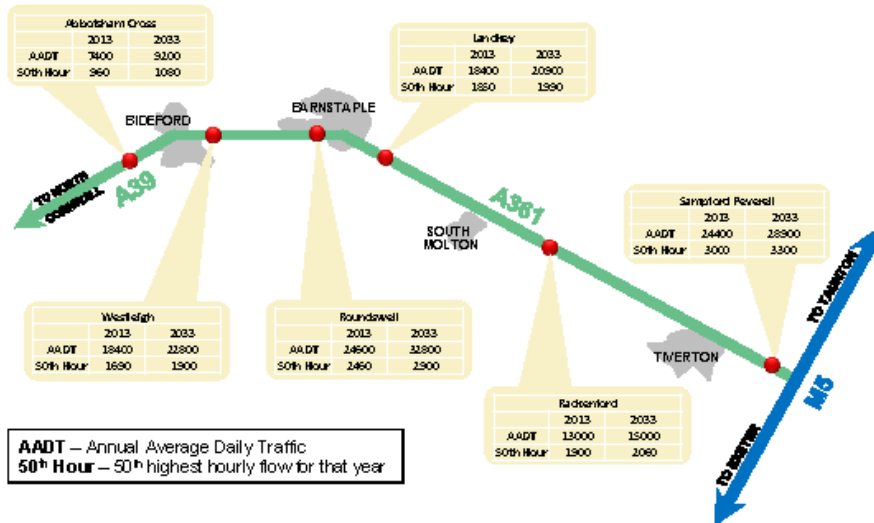
Room No. Lucombe House, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, EX2 4QD

Tel No: (01392) 383372

Background Paper	Date	File Reference
1. Gateway to Northern Devon – A strategy for the North Devon Link Road	April 2014	

sj170614cab A Gateway to North Devon County Council
hk 05 270614

Predicted Growth



Traffic Flows – Informing the Strategy

The Seasonality Index is a good representation of changes in traffic flows throughout the year and is calculated by dividing the Average Daily August flow by the Annual Average Daily Traffic flow. The seasonality Index values along the A361 vary, with Roundswell being low suggesting it is used mainly by local traffic and commuters, while some sites are above 1.3 which indicates the traffic is highly seasonal.

Location	Seasonality Index
Abbotsham	1.38
Westleigh	1.15
Roundswell	1.11
Landkey	1.13
Rackenford	1.33
Sampford Peverell	1.21

The 50th highest hour is a good measure of regular high traffic flows on a road with high seasonality. The 50th highest hour is not expected to grow at the same rate as the AADT because the road will reach capacity, meaning that the traffic flows will spread into the adjacent hours. The 50th highest hour can be used to predict the average speed along the road, the result of which can be used to identify areas which are close to or exceeding capacity.

Roundswell shows a high AADT and has a low average speed, indicating the need for road expansion in order to accommodate traffic flows. The section between Tiverton and Barnstaple is close to requiring improvements to maintain the current average speed.

Although Rackenford and Landkey both show similar 50th highest hours, they have significantly different AADT flows. This is due to the high levels of commuter traffic passing through Landkey, which gives consistent daily flows compared to the fluctuating tourist peak traffic passing through Rackenford.

Email comments to transportplanning@devon.gov.uk or if you wish to respond to or receive the consultation document in another format, please contact Natasha Cole on 01392 382805 or write to **AB 2 Lucombe House, County Hall, Topsham Rd, Exeter EX2 4QD**



CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

Gateway to Northern Devon – A Strategy for the North Devon Link Road

Background

The North Devon Link Road (NDR) forms the key link between the M5 motorway, South Molton, Barnstaple, Bideford and North Cornwall. The route is comprised of the A361 from the M5 Junction 27 to Lake roundabout in Barnstaple; then the A39 'Atlantic Highway' continues to Bideford and into North Cornwall.

The overall volume of daily traffic along the route has risen by about 1% per year in the past decade, and forecasts suggest a further rise over the next two decades.

A number of improvements will help support new developments along the route. The current development plan includes:

- **Tiverton:** 2000 homes, 40 Ha employment
- **South Molton:** 1100 homes, 30 Ha employment
- **Barnstaple:** 5300 homes, 50 Ha employment
- **Bideford & Northam:** 3800 homes, 30 Ha employment
- **Ilfracombe:** 1550 homes, 15 Ha employment

The development plan for the next period is currently being formulated, the aim of this strategy is to work with this emerging framework to deliver the growth of the emerging plan.

The corridor is the key strategic link between Northern Devon and the M5.

Our aim is to ensure that this busy commuter, leisure and freight route continues to function as a safe and convenient 'Gateway to North Devon'.

Improvements along the route will help meet the growing needs of new development in Mid Devon, North Devon and Torridge.



Heywood Road Roundabout
This roundabout experiences periods of congestion.

Increasing the size of the roundabout would allow more lanes of traffic to travel through the junction.

Bishop's Tawton Roundabout
This roundabout experiences substantial queuing during peak periods.

Increasing the size of the roundabout and allow more lanes of traffic to travel through the junction.

Portmore Roundabout
Portmore is the gateway to Barnstaple and in future may serve development to the north.

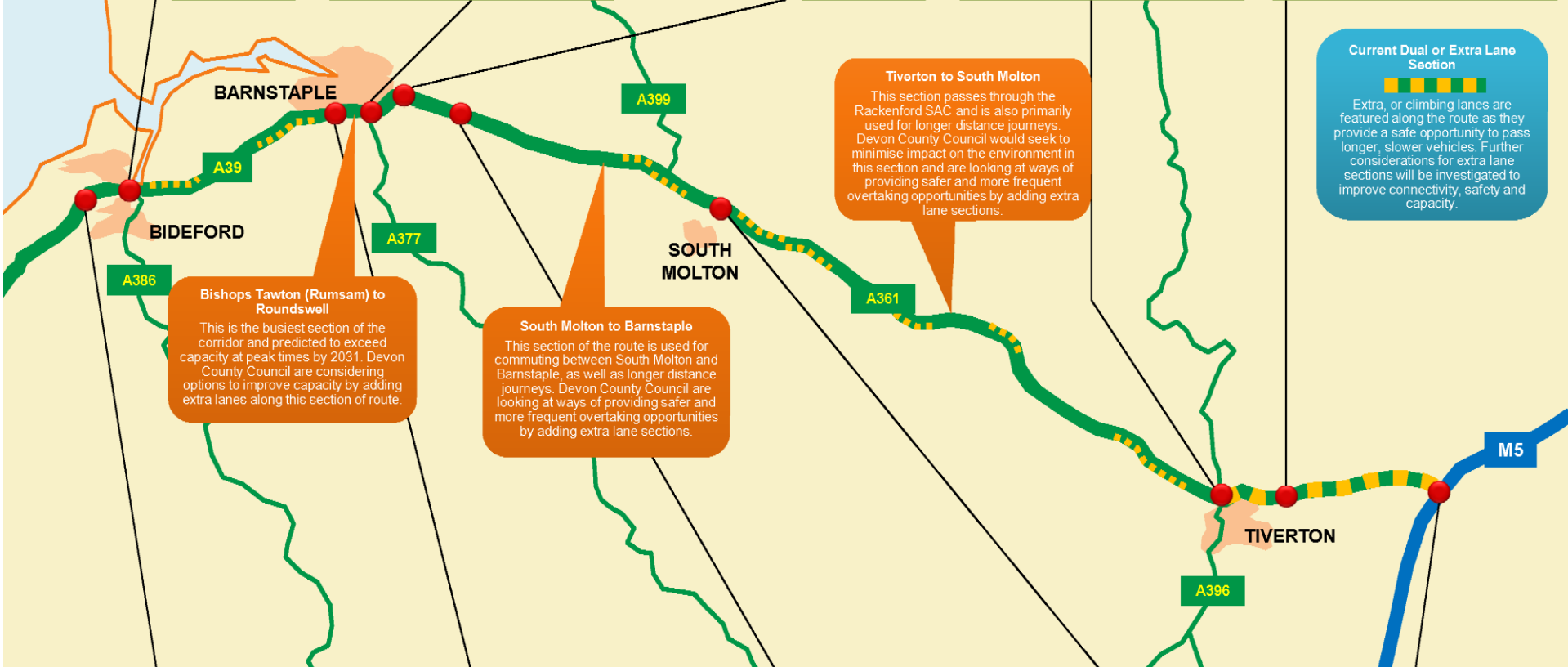
The roundabout may be reconfigured to create a fourth arm to serve future development.

Bolham Roundabout
Bolham experiences queuing where the carriageway changes from dual to single.

Devon County Council is looking at options to manage the capacity of the roundabout and minimise queuing on the A361.

Tiverton Eastern Urban Extension – Access Junction
This will be the principal access to the Tiverton Eastern Urban Extension.

This will be a grade-separated junction, typically found on dual carriageways and motorways, but can be introduced on other roads.



Tiverton to South Molton
This section passes through the Rackenford SAC and is also primarily used for longer distance journeys. Devon County Council would seek to minimise impact on the environment in this section and are looking at ways of providing safer and more frequent overtaking opportunities by adding extra lane sections.

Current Dual or Extra Lane Section
Extra, or climbing lanes are featured along the route as they provide a safe opportunity to pass longer, slower vehicles. Further considerations for extra lane sections will be investigated to improve connectivity, safety and capacity.

Bishops Tawton (Rumsam) to Roundswell
This is the busiest section of the corridor and predicted to exceed capacity at peak times by 2031. Devon County Council are considering options to improve capacity by adding extra lanes along this section of route.

South Molton to Barnstaple
This section of the route is used for commuting between South Molton and Barnstaple, as well as longer distance journeys. Devon County Council are looking at ways of providing safer and more frequent overtaking opportunities by adding extra lane sections.

Abbotsham Road (Big Sheep)
The junction is currently a priority T-junction, which can cause problems with queuing traffic.

A possible improvement is to adapt the junction to create an all movements 'grade separated' junction using the existing bridge.

Roundswell Roundabout
This roundabout experiences substantial queuing during peak periods.

Devon County Council will be improving this roundabout in 2014 using Pinch Point Funds. For further information please see: www.devon.gov.uk/jppf

Landkey Junction
The junction at Landkey is currently a priority T-junction between the A361 and Blake's Hill Road.

This could be improved to either a roundabout or a grade-separated junction.

Borner's Bridge
Borner's Bridge at South Molton is currently a complex priority junction.

One possible improvement option is to create a grade separated junction which would allow traffic to enter and exit the A361 using slip roads.

Junction 27
At present, severe queues on the M5 exit slip roads can occur during periods of high demand.

A scheme is proposed to widen the southbound exit slip road to three lanes, along with partial widening of the roundabout and part time signals.