

Environment Economy and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Honiton Eastern Bypass

1. Recommendations

The task group makes the following recommendations to the Environment, Economy and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee and proposes that they are endorsed to the Executive Member for Highways and Planning

Recommendation
<p>1) That Devon County Council should lobby Government Office, the Highways Agency and South West Regional Assembly, to assess an Eastern Bypass for Honiton as a scheme in its own right. (Eastern Bypass previously considered as part of A30/A303 improvements)</p> <p>2) If development is identified to the east of Honiton as part of the Local Development Framework, that East Devon District Council be requested to earmark the land necessary for an Eastern Bypass in the Local Development Plan, and consideration should be given to a bypass being provided in co-operation with other authorities in conjunction with this new development in the east of Honiton. Consideration should be given to S106 funding.</p> <p>4) In the interim, that pressure be put on the Highways Agency to put in place measures for pedestrians, cyclists and wheelchair users to safely cross the A35, including measures on Kings Road close to the High street junction, to increase inclusion for those living to the East of the A35 and encouraging economic development of the town centre to the East together with measures to introduce an effective 30mph speed limit on the developed length of Kings Road.</p>

2. Executive Summary

2.1 This report contains the evidence and detail of the task group's investigation that support the above recommendations.

2.2 The A35 trunk road, Honiton to Bere Regis is a privately run road set up under a contract between The Secretary of State for Transport and Connect A30/A35 Ltd.

2.3 The initial concern was that with the development of Cranbrook, Skypark and the Business Park would come further traffic and congestion on the A35 Monkton Road and Kings Road, especially during construction, causing further exclusion to those residents living to the East of the A35.

2.4 Honiton is a vibrant market town with approximately 11,500 residents and serving an area with around 17,500 residents. The A35 divides the town and currently to use any of their local services or facilities residents to the East of the A35 must make either a car journey with all the associated problems for a busy town that more cars bring, or a very hazardous crossing of the A35, with heavy traffic, poor visibility and no designated crossing points.

2.5 The task group's investigation has been wide ranging, including discussions with the local community, emergency services, the Highways

2.6 Agency and local planning officers, having sight of a number of reports on the issue of the A35 and comparisons with other local bypasses.

3. Background

3.1 The following notice of motion was put forward at the meeting of the Executive on Tuesday 17th June 2008 by Councillor Boote:

'To support a request from Honiton town council to lobby Government Office, the Highways Authority and South West Regional Assembly to insist that the East bypass for Honiton Town, which was recommended by the Highways Authority in 1993 is built before, or at least in conjunction with any new settlements (Cranbrook) west of Honiton'

At this meeting the Executive referred the notice of motion to the Environment, Economy and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration and to report back.

3.2 At the meeting on the 9th September the EEC Overview and Scrutiny established the task group with the following members:

Councillors Boote (chairman), S. Hughes, Nicholson, Foggin, Berry and Connolly

Local context

3.3 The table below charts the timeline of developments on the issue:

Date	Action	Agency	Road
1990's	Dual carriageway proposed between Illminster and Honiton, including Eastern bypass connecting to A35	DoT	A303/A30
1993	Highways and Transportation Committee welcomed the DoT intention to introduce a dual carriage way and build the bypass. However the DfT did not incorporate all the modifications of the scheme that DCC had proposed. As a result DCC made a formal objection and gave evidence at the public inquiry.	DCC	
1995	Public inquiry was held		
1998	The government published "A New Deal for Trunk Roads". As part of this document the improvements on A303/A30 between the M3 and Exeter were deferred and a multi-modal study was established.	DETR	
2003	Multi-modal study concluded and the Secretary of State asked the Highways Agency to investigate two options for the route from Illminster to the M5.	Secretary of State and Highways Agency	A358 or A303/A30
2004	DCC Executive outlined strong support for the A303/A30 and Honiton Eastern bypass	DCC	A303/A30
2004	Secretary of State for Transport approved the dualling of A358.	Secretary of State	A358
2005	Highways Agency remove route protection for Illminster to Honiton and Honiton Eastern Bypass schemes	Highways Agency	A303/A30

4 The A30/A35 Junction at Honiton

4.1 Since there is currently nothing proposed in relation to a bypass, discussing specifics about the current road in light of any future proposals becomes tricky. The task group has used the previous plan drawn up by The Secretary of State for Transport in 1992.

4.2 The Honiton Eastern Bypass was previously coupled with the A303/A30 Marsh - Honiton upgrade. The South West & South Wales Multi -Modal Study (SWARMMS) reported in 2002 that "the Honiton Eastern bypass had no role to play within a strategy which focussed on the main A303/A30 corridor"

5 Local Issues

5.1 Residents of the area to the East of Kings Road and Monkton Road were of the opinion that traffic regularly exceeds speeds of 40mph on Kings Road. This is a residential road with driveway access points and it is felt that 30mph would be a more appropriate speed.

5.2 Crossing the roads is very dangerous as there are no pedestrian crossings, visibility coming down the hill is an issue (as stated by the Honiton Community Study " mini roundabout has restricted visibility from Kings Road due to an existing boundary wall"), footpaths on both roads are narrow giving no escape if a vehicle mounts the kerb. A residential establishment for vulnerable people including some with visual impairment has recently been built on the eastern side of the A35, residents also use wheelchairs.

5.3 A large amount of Heavy Goods Vehicles use the road and when coming down the hill on Kings Road have to turn right as there are weight restrictions in place on the High Street. This involves a sharp right hand turn on a hill causing negotiating the junction a problem.

5.4 Members of the Honiton Town Council met with the Highways Agency on 27 November 2008 and 10 February 2009 to discuss proposals for safety measures on the Kings Road/Monkton Road junction which the Highways Agency had been working on since November 2008. The Town Council's preferred option remains a fully signalised pedestrian crossing at the junction of Kings Road and Monkton Road. Any crossing on Monkton Road would only be acceptable to the Town Council subject to consideration of a number of key points of concern and an additional crossing on Kings Road.

5.5 East Devon District Council holds S106 funding of 10,000 towards the construction of a pedestrian crossing of Kings Road near the junction with High Street, related to the development of a residential home for vulnerable citizens, including those with visual impairments.

6. Accident Data

6.1 Accident data was provided for a five year period from 2003 to 2007. Within that period were 12 accidents in the area concerned, one of which was serious but with no fatalities. From the data it was found that 35% occurred on a wet/damp road with many of the accidents involving road furniture such as signs traffic signals and lamp posts.

6.2 The traffic data for 2007 from the DBFO traffic counter, the vehicle kilometres travelled through the 1.17km section from Monkton Road to Copper Castle is:
12,300 vehs x 365 days x 1.17 km = 5.23 million veh km per year (2 way)

7. Cranbrook, Skypark and Business Park

7.1 At present it seems that the Cranbrook development would not be proceeding until 2012, however there are real concerns regarding the worsening traffic congestion on the A30/A35 especially during construction of Cranbrook and the increased pollution generated by the transport of materials and construction vehicles. Cranbrook is currently planned to accommodate 2,900 dwellings with supporting facilities and infrastructure although current policy recognises that it will grow beyond this size. The proposed changes to the RSS propose 7,500 dwellings at Cranbrook to 2026

7.2 We have been told that "wherever possible and wherever practicable and commercially viable, materials used at Cranbrook would be sourced from sustainable local sources". Also due to the size of the development, that a Construction Environmental Management Plan would be in place designating transport routes, parking locations and such like to minimise problems.

7.3 It appears that contributions from the development towards changes to the A35 or the provision of an Eastern Bypass at Honiton are unlikely and that the S106 agreement will probably have to be renegotiated. In order to seek a contribution to a scheme, the scheme

must be programmed. In seeking any planning obligations against a development, authorities must ensure that the obligation meets certain criteria:

- * that it is relevant
- * necessary to make the development acceptable
- * directly related to the proposed development
- * fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development and reasonable in all other aspects.

"Obligations should be directly related in scale to the impact which the proposed development would make". In the case of Cranbrook, the effect of increased traffic flow on the A35 is likely to be less than 3%, taking into account that traffic flow is currently 1000 vehicles in a peak hour and would rise by a max 30 vehicles per hour when Cranbrook, Skypark and the Science Park is established.

7.4 Government policy is, wherever possible to seek alternative solutions to building new roads, by reducing the impact of road users on each other and the environment, improving road performance through improved network management and facilitating smarter journey choices. "The presumption should be to give preference where possible to solutions other than the construction of new roads".

8. Future Development Within Honiton

8.1 East Devon District Council have recently consulted about the future of planning and development in East Devon. The consultation document reproduces questions featuring in the East Devon Local Development Framework Issues & Options Report. Responses to the consultation were to be returned by 13 February 2009.

8.2 The Honiton Community Strategic Plan sets out a vision for :

A caring, environmentally friendly, socially inclusive community

A vibrant local community with further sustainable business opportunities generated by progressive thinking;

A town & surrounding area with a well integrated transport network striking a healthy balance between the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

A town & surrounding area well served by sports and leisure opportunities, including open spaces and paths and other community facilities - all encouraging physical activity and fitness, friendliness and inclusiveness.

8.3 Currently with several hundred people living to the east of the A35, with no safe access to the town and its facilities for pedestrians, cyclists or wheelchair users, inclusiveness cannot be encouraged. Families are having to use vehicles for all journeys into the town to use services including schools, doctors, shops, causing congestion within the town centre and its car parks.

8.4 Over the past 10 years around 80 dwellings per year have been built in Honiton. If this rate of building continues, Honiton could expect to accommodate an additional 1,600 dwellings over the 2006 to 2026 period. Possible directions of growth in Honiton include 4 broad areas, however with the constraints of the A30 to the North and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to the South & North, extending the town to the East and West are the only viable options. It is understood that land to the west of the town is allocated for industrial use and is therefore unlikely to be available for housing. The Task Group were advised that any significant residential development was likely to be to the east of the A35

8.5 Although it is unlikely that the early development in Honiton would see the amount of expansion needed to reach the area of the previously proposed Eastern Bypass, it would be wise to seek to earmark the land within the Local Development Plan in order to avoid a situation where new development obstructs line of future bypass. In the longer term consideration should be given to whether later phases of this development could provide a road forming part of an eastern bypass route to improve the situation on the existing A35.

8.6 There is a high level of demand from businesses looking to move to the town, relocate within it or expand on existing sites. Heathpark Industrial Estate is currently home to a number of large retail businesses. With this in mind, the town needs adequate transport links, without causing detriment to the residents of the town and their ability to access services and facilities in safety.

9. Honiton Community Study

9.1 The Study was produced by Atkins Highways and Transportation for Balfour Beatty Infrastructure Services.

9.2 Whilst the recommendations in the Honiton Community Study are supported as measures to improve safety for drivers, it is considered that the purpose of the report: -"To investigate, identify and prepare a package of measures that aim to improve safety, integration, accessibility and the community environment for road users, non motorised and motorised, and residents of Honiton " is not met by the recommendations. The safety and accessibility needs of non motorised users and residents are not addressed by the recommended measures.

9.3 The Task Group consider any short term package of measures should include: -

(a) safe crossing facilities on Kings Road and Monkton Road for pedestrians, cyclists and users of wheelchairs to enable "non motorised" residents to travel between their homes and the town centre facilities and to access public transport;

(b) measures to introduce an effective 30mph speed limit in the developed length of Kings Road".

10. Sources of Evidence

The task group heard testimony from a number of sources and would like to thank the following for their involvement and the information they have shared

Honiton Town Council

Nigel Harrison & John Maidment, East Devon District Council

Steve Hellier, Network Planning Manager & David Wright, Regional Manager, The Highways Agency

Brian Hensley, Development Manager, Highways & Transport, Devon County Council
Emergency Services

Mike Moore, Haulage company representative

11. Useful Documents

Dft Towards a sustainable transport strategy

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/about/strategy/transportstrategy/hmtlsustaintranssys>

Maps of the area in question

A new deal for trunk roads in England

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/economics/rdg/multimodal/anewdealfortrunkroadsinengla5492>

Report of the Executive Director of Environment, Economy and Culture 'Honiton Eastern Bypass' to the EEC O/S Committee 9 September 2008

Honiton Community Study Highways Agency

East Devon LDF Issues and Options Report

Appendix 1: Map of the current roads through Honiton

Appendix 2:

Testimony from Haulage Company representative Mike Moore

The A35 & A30 provide an important link along the south coast currently if goods and services are to be provided to the local community and businesses it is critical that good reliable road links are in place. Any improvements along the A35 would unquestionably help and support these communities.

Modern vehicles are now some of the cleanest and quietest in Europe, operators have been slowly but surely investing in this new technology and it is currently the most efficient and economical way of supporting and developing businesses and communities.

With the restrictions on drivers hours coupled together with the working time directive it is important that good road connections are available. Quite clearly improving this stretch of road would be of benefit not just to the Road haulage industry but everyone else and we would therefore support any improvements to this stretch.

Exeter has a very busy economy and developing with its current road network North and South being of good reliable quality the East route is currently the weak link for everyone. Sadly we have seen on occasions if the M5 experiences problems the alternative routes simply cannot cope. Needless to say this causes great disruption not just to the haulage industry but the general public at large. Any improvements in the road network would benefit all road users.