

Impact Assessment



Assessment of: Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road

Service: Planning – Climate Change, Environment and Transport

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Assessment carried out by (job title): Assistant Transportation Planning Officer

1. Description of project / service / activity / policy under review

Cullompton is a market town within the Mid Devon district, located adjacent to the M5 motorway which acts as the main travel and economic corridor for the South West of England. Cullompton Town Centre holds significant historic importance with several listed buildings, however Historic England designated the town as being at risk to congestion issues due to the prevalence of vehicles.

Cullompton High Street experiences extremely high traffic flows, with queuing on the constrained network observed daily. Currently, any traffic wishing to through Cullompton is required to drive on High Street, including heavy commercial vehicles, resulting in town centre dominated by traffic and congestion. Traffic blocks back from the M5 Junction 28 roundabout in the AM peak, while parking and right turning traffic in the High Street cause significant queuing in the evening.

The High Street is dominated by slow moving vehicles, which has led to Cullompton being designated an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). This, in addition to narrow pavements has made the High Street an unpleasant experience for pedestrians and cyclist and the local economy has suffered as a result.

The Town Centre Relief Road proposals aim to remove traffic from the High Street, improving air quality in the AQMA and unlocking development, otherwise prevented due to highway capacity constraints.

2. Proposal, aims and objectives, and reason for change or review

The Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road will connect Duke Street in the south to Station Road in the north, with a fourth arm added to the existing Millennium Way roundabout. The route will pass through the public open space and sports pitches, staying close to the

railway line to avoid additional disruption to the Public Open Space known as the Cullompton Community Association (CCA) fields. The cricket club will be relocated to the east of the M5, with reconfiguration of the bowling club and football pitches within the existing area. The proposals also include upgrades to the walking and cycling routes through the CCA fields, and the provision of additional links along Meadow Lane to the Community College. This will help remove traffic from the Town Centre, making it more pedestrian friendly and encouraging local trips to be undertaken by sustainable modes.

The proposals aim to relieve congestion in Cullompton Town Centre by providing an alternative route effectively bypassing the High Street, improve air quality in the area by improving traffic flow, and to unlock development allocated within the Mid Devon Local Plan. The scheme will also reduce queuing on the northbound off-slip at Junction 28 of the M5 by providing a free-flowing exit and avoid the queues blocking back from the High Street.

Following planning approval, Mid Devon have now received funding from Homes England to deliver the route, with funding available until March 2028.

3. Risk assessment, limitations and options explored (summary)

Risk assessment

Relocating the cricket club is a planning condition of the Relief Road and works have already started on the replacement facility to make sure the scheme can be delivered by the funding deadline. Acquisition of land is not guaranteed, hence the CPO application.

Limitations

One limitation of the proposals is that the delivery of the Relief Road will not achieve its full benefits without wider junction improvements being made at Junction 28 on the M5. Delivery of the Relief Road alone will significantly benefit the town centre, through removing significant levels of traffic, however, congestion is likely to remain on the Station Road corridor. This is seen as the first phase of transport mitigation works for the town.

Options Explored

Do nothing

Not progressing with the Relief Road would result in Cullompton Town Centre continuing to be vehicle dominated with existing congestion issues continuing. Additionally, this would maintain the existing air quality problems in Cullompton Town Centre, and the resulting public health impacts.

By not progressing the Relief Road, land for development and growth in the Cullompton area will be stalled, impacting on the deliverability of Mid Devon’s Local Plan.

Alternative route alignment

Three route alignments of the Relief Road were considered and taken to public consultation. These included the proposed alignment, a more direct alignment through the CCA field, further away from the railway line, and a relief road to the east of the M5 motorway. The proposed alignment received the greatest level of public support in the consultation, and has the comparative benefits in that it will have less of an impact on the public open space than the more direct route, and will take more traffic out of the town centre than a road exiting the town to the east of the motorway would.

4. People affected, diversity profile and analysis of needs

The people potentially affected by the proposals are principally those living and working in Cullompton and the surrounding Mid Devon area. Therefore, their diversity profile is presented below, with Devon and England overall used as comparators.

Age

Table 1 illustrates the percentage of the population broken down by age, in Cullompton and Mid Devon, compared to Devon and England.

TABLE 1: AGE (CENSUS, 2021)

Geography	% Age 0-19	% Age 20-64	% Age 65+
Cullompton	19%	61%	20%
Mid Devon	18%	58%	24%
Devon	20%	54%	26%
England	23%	58%	19%

Table 1 shows that Cullompton is similar to Devon in age structure but does have slightly higher proportions of working age people which links to the higher number of commuting trips seen in the town.

Sex

Table 2 details the percentage of the population broken down by sex, in Cullompton and Mid Devon, compared to Devon and England.

TABLE 2: SEX (CENSUS, 2021)

Geography	Female	Male

Cullompton	50.9%	49.1%
Mid Devon	51.2%	48.8%
Devon	51.5%	48.5%
England	51.0%	49.0%

As in England overall, there were slightly more females than males in Cullompton with female making up 50.9% of the population. This is reflected similarly in Mid Devon and Devon as a whole.

Ethnicity

Table 3 illustrates the percentage of the population broken down by ethnicity, in Cullompton and Mid Devon, compared to Devon and England.

TABLE 3: ETHNICITY (CENSUS, 2021)

Geography	% White	% Mixed / multiple ethnic groups	% Asian / Asian British	% Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	% Other ethnic group
Cullompton	96.8%	1.4%	1.4%	0.2%	0.3%
Mid Devon	97.8%	1.1%	0.7%	0.1%	0.3%
Devon	96.4%	1.4%	1.5%	0.3%	0.5%
England	81.0%	3.0%	9.6%	4.2%	2.2%

Cullompton, Mid Devon and Devon are lower in ethnic diversity than the national average.

Health and Disability

Table 4 shows that Cullompton and Mid Devon have similar health and disability levels when compared to averages of Devon and England.

TABLE 4: DISABILITY AND GENERAL HEALTH (CENSUS, 2021)

Geography	% Activities limited a little by disability	% Activities limited a lot by disability	% Not disabled under the Equality Act	% Very good and good health	% Fair health	% Bad and very bad health

Cullompton	11.1%	7.7%	81.2%	81.2%	13.9%	4.9%
Mid Devon	11.3%	7.2%	81.5%	82.0%	13.2%	4.8%
Devon	11.1%	6.9%	82.0%	83.4%	12.0%	4.6%
England	10.2%	7.5%	82.3%	81.7%	13.0%	5.3%

Socio-economic status

Table 5 shows the levels of deprivation in Cullompton and Mid Devon compared to Devon and England as a whole.

TABLE 5: HOUSEHOLD DEPRIVATION (CENSUS, 2021)

Geography	% Household is not deprived in any dimension	% Household is deprived in one or two dimensions	% Household is deprived in three or four dimensions
Cullompton	47.3%	50.2%	2.5%
Mid Devon	49.1%	48.1%	2.7%
Devon	49.6%	37.6%	2.8%
England	48.4%	47.7%	3.9%

Whilst Devon as a whole has less deprivation than England, both Cullompton and Mid Devon have slightly more households deprived in one or two dimensions compared to the national average. However, both Cullompton and Mid Devon show lower proportions of households deprived in three or four dimensions than averages in both Devon and England.

5. Stakeholders, their interest and potential impacts

There are a number of different stakeholders involved and consulted on through the development of the scheme. These include:

Mid Devon District Council – Construction of the Town Centre relief road unlocks development allocated in the Mid Devon Local Plan Review. Failure to construct the road could result in a land supply issue, preventing development targets being fulfilled. Mid Devon District Council have been given the funding from Homes England.

Environment Agency – the planned alignment of the relief road goes through the flood plain.

Cullompton Community Association (CCA) – the relief road is to be constructed through fields belonging to the CCA. Construction of the relief road will result in some of the CCA field space being lost.

Cullompton Sports Clubs – Cullompton Cricket, Football and Bowls clubs are located on the CCA fields which will be used for construction of the road. These sports clubs will be relocated as a part of the delivery of the scheme.

Members of the Public – the relief road would improve air quality in the town centre, providing a cleaner and safer environment for members of the public. The alignment of the relief road would however result in a reduction of green space available to the public to use.

All of these stakeholders have been engaged as the scheme has progressed, either directly or through the engagement events.

6. Additional relevant research used to inform this assessment

- National Travel Survey (2022)
- Census (2021)

7. Description of consultation process and outcomes

Three rounds of public engagement have been undertaken through the development of the Town Centre Relief Road proposals:

The first public engagement period was undertaken between 13 September 2018 and 25 October 2018. This engagement asked member of the public if they agreed with the need for a town centre relief road, as well as seeking opinions on three potential alignment options of the road.

Overall, 77% of respondents agreed with the need for a town centre relief road, with 10% not sure if they agreed or not and 13% stating they did not agree with the need for a town centre relief road. Of the three relief road alignments presented in this consultation, a route which aligns closest to the west of the railway line and the M5 motorway was identified as the Preferred Option.

A second consultation was held between 19 November 2019 and 20 December 2019 seeking public feedback on the proposed Relief Road design. 121 responses were received, with the majority of respondents agreeing that the proposals would meet the scheme objectives.

A third public engagement was undertaken between 13 December 2023 and 5 February 2024 as a part of the wider M5 Junction 28 and Town Centre Relief Road scheme. This public engagement received 884 responses, of which 92% (838) supported the need for a town centre relief road.

Public views were also sought as part of the planning application process.

Background information

8. Equality analysis

Under the Equality Act 2010, the local authority must consider how people will be affected by a service, policy or practice. In so doing we must give due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations across protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership (for work), sex, sexual orientation, race, and religion and belief. The Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation does not prevent the Council from taking difficult decisions which result in service reductions or closures for example, it does however require the Council to ensure that such decisions are: informed and properly considered with a rigorous, conscious approach and open mind, taking due regard of the effects on the protected characteristics and the general duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations; proportionate (negative impacts are proportionate to the aims of the policy decision); fair, necessary, reasonable, and those affected have been adequately consulted.

- a) Is this group negatively or potentially negatively impacted, and in what way?
- b) What could be done or has been done to remove the potential for direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or disadvantage and inequalities?
- c) In what way do you consider any negative consequences to be reasonable and proportionate in order to achieve a legitimate aim?
- d) What can be done to advance equality further? This could include meeting specific needs, ensuring equality of opportunity and access, encouraging participation, empowering people, making adjustments for disabled people and action to reduce disparities and inequalities.
- e) Is there a need to foster good relations between groups (tackled prejudice and promote understanding) and help people to be safe and protected from harm? What can be done?

All residents by geographic area

The proposals will likely impact residents and employees of Cullompton and residents and employees of the surrounding area.

Some traffic disruption is to be expected for most residents in Cullompton during the construction of the relief road, due to an increase in construction vehicles, traffic management, road closures, and diversion routes. However, this will be kept to a minimum through a construction management plan.

Age

No negative consequences are expected.

Improvements made by the delivery of the relief road will benefit anyone, of any age, who uses private cars, motorcycles and public transport by reducing traffic journey times and improving user experience. The additional active travel provision and connections will also help age groups who are more reliant on walking and cycling and the reduction in traffic in the town centre as a result of the proposals will improve the pedestrian environment. Therefore, no age group is particularly negatively impacted by the scheme.

Disability (includes sensory, mobility, mental health, learning disability, neurodiversity, long term ill health) and carers of disabled people

No negative impacts are expected.

The relief road will improve the highway network for all road users. Diverting traffic from the High Street will benefit people who require additional support in navigating public spaces, improving safety and user experience for those affected. With reduced traffic in the town centre and a less polluted, quieter environment, it can benefit people who are autistic or have other similar sensory and cognitive impairments with less chance of experiencing uncomfortable sensory overload.

Race and culture: nationality/national origin, ethnic origin, skin colour, religion and belief, asylum seeker and refugee status, language needs

No negative consequences expected.

The proposals will benefit all ethnicities who use private cars, motorcycles and public transport. The additional active travel provision and connections will also help people from ethnic minority groups who are often more reliant on active travel and public transport modes for travel.

Sex and gender identity and reassignment (including men, women, non-binary and transgender people), and pregnancy and maternity (including women's right to breastfeed)

It is not expected that the proposals will negatively impact any particular sex or gender identity.

The relief road proposals will benefit everyone, of any sex/gender identity, who uses

private cars, motorcycles, public transport, and active travel.

Sexual orientation, and marriage/civil partnership if work related

It is not expected that the proposals will negatively impact anyone based on their sexual orientation, or marriage/civil partnership status.

Other relevant socio-economic factors and intersectionality

This includes:

- people on low incomes, children in care and care experienced people, armed services veterans, family background (size/single people/lone parents/family carers etc.), sub-cultures, refugee status, asylum seeker no recourse to public funds.
- housing quality and tenure, education and skills, language and literacy skills, health and wellbeing.
- rural isolation, access to services and transport, access to ICT/Broadband, social connectivity.

Also consider intersectionality with other characteristics.

Cullompton is more deprived than Devon as a whole, with 52.7% of the population deprived in some dimension (Census, 2021). The relief road proposals will improve the highway network for all modes of transport, which will improve access to education and employment opportunities.

9. Human rights considerations:

We need to ensure that human rights are protected. In particular, that people have:

- A reasonable level of choice in where and how they live their life and interact with others (this is an aspect of the human right to 'private and family life').
- An appropriate level of care which results in dignity and respect (the protection to a private and family life, protection from torture and the freedom of thought, belief and religion within the Human Rights Act and elimination of discrimination and the promotion of good relations under the Equality Act 2010).
- A right to life (ensuring that nothing we do results in unlawful or unnecessary/avoidable death).

It is not considered that there are any relevant human rights considerations. However, improving transport infrastructure may enable individuals to exercise human rights more easily, such as the right to employment or the right to education (both enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) by improving access to employment/education by all modes of travel.

10. Environmental analysis

An impact assessment should give due regard to the following activities in order to ensure we meet a range of environmental legal duties. The policy or practice does not require the identification of environmental impacts using this Impact Assessment process because it is subject to (please mark X in the relevant box below and proceed to the 11, otherwise complete the environmental analysis information below):

Devon County Council's Environmental Review Process	
Planning Permission	X
Environmental Impact Assessment	
Strategic Environmental Assessment	

11. Economic analysis

- Description of any actual or potential negative consequences and consider how to mitigate against these.
- Description of any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes and consider how to improve as far as possible.

Impact on knowledge and skills

The proposed improvements have the potential to improve access to key local and regional transport routes, including public transport and active travel, for residents by helping to reduce constraints associated with congestion. Access to local academic institutions, early careers, and training courses, including at Cullompton Community College, will also be improved through the reduction in town centre traffic and the associated transport improvements.

Impact on employment levels

The town centre relief road will improve access to local and regional transport routes for car users, public transport users and active travel users, in Cullompton, increasing access to employment.

Additionally, delivery of the relief road will unlock development land in the local area for both residential and commercial uses. This will help grow the potential pool of employees locally, and increase the number of places of employment in the local area.

Impact on local business

Construction of the Town Centre Relief Road will result in a reduction of traffic on Cullompton's High Street. The reduction in traffic on the High Street, which will include a

reduction in heavy vehicles, will improve air quality, creating a more pleasant environment for shoppers, encouraging people to visit local businesses in the area.