



# **Bexhill to Hastings Link Road Planning Statement**

East Sussex County Council  
County Hall  
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East Sussex

# **Bexhill Hastings Link Road**

## **Planning Statement**

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Purpose of the Planning Statement**

1.1.1 This statement has been prepared in support of the planning application for the Bexhill Hastings Link Road (the Scheme). It is one of a number of documents that accompany the planning application. Its purpose is to explain the rationale for the proposal including its background and the principles behind it.

1.1.2 In addition to this statement, the application submission comprises the following suite of documents:

- The application form, plans and drawings, requisite notices;
- A Regeneration Statement – reporting the results of an assessment of the regeneration effects of the Scheme and how far it facilitates the regeneration objectives for the area;
- An Environmental Statement (ES) – a statutory document required to inform the decision maker of the scale and potential environmental effects of the proposal. The ES comprises a non-technical summary; a main report; appendices and figures and illustrations;
- A Sustainability Appraisal – setting out how the Scheme performs against a set of agreed sustainability objectives. These objectives reflect national regional and local objectives for sustainability;
- A Traffic and Transport Report – setting out the traffic modelling results and incorporating the economic assessment report of the Scheme;
- A Design and Access Statement; and
- A Waste Management Strategy.

1.1.3 The extent of the information provided in support of the Scheme proposals reflects the comprehensive approach taken to the overall design. It also illustrates the extent to which the scheme meets its objectives and how far it facilitates and contributes to the achievement of the Five Point Plan for regenerating the Bexhill and Hastings area (see section 2.3 below).

1.1.4 This statement sets out the case for the new road in a concise and easily absorbed way but for fully detailed information, it should be read in conjunction with the other material.

### **1.2 Scope of this Report**

1.2.1 The sections that follow show:

- How the Link Road scheme has emerged, with Government support at key stages, as part of the multi-agency Five Point Plan for regenerating Hastings and Bexhill. The Plan is a comprehensive approach to the deep-seated economic and social problems of the area and through a range of measures focuses efforts which are beginning to show results.

- How great care has been taken to ensure that the scheme is designed in a way that reduces any adverse environmental effects to a practicable minimum.
- How the scheme is consistent with, and indeed is necessary to fulfil, planning policies at local and regional level, including strategic housing targets.
- The case for the scheme is then reviewed from a range of perspectives:
  - Regeneration;
  - Planning;
  - Transport; and
  - Environment.

1.2.2 Taken together, a strong positive justification can be demonstrated.

1.2.3 Above all, the Link Road is an integral part of the package for turning round the fortunes of Hastings. The dependency of the overall regeneration strategy on this vital piece of infrastructure is such that, without it, it would not be possible to deliver the scale of improvements judged necessary for success.

## **2. Basis for the Scheme**

### **2.1 Background History**

2.1.1 In common with the majority of seaside towns in the post-war years, Hastings experienced many years of decline in its traditional holiday based economy and a growth in its elderly population.

2.1.2 The Town Development Area initiative in the NW of the Borough, which began in the mid 1970s, was a response to this. It provided three new employment areas and new housing of mixed tenure. The initiative resulted in:

- An influx of family age population which reduced the elderly population from 30% to 21%; and
- The creation of a healthy manufacturing employment sector.

2.1.3 Despite this progress, growing deprivation and fundamental weaknesses of the economy were recognised in 1992 when Hastings was given Assisted Area Status. A key cause of the failing economic performance was acknowledged to be the peripherality of the town. With improvements taking place elsewhere in the region, its relative inaccessibility has actually continued to get worse through the 1990s to the present.

2.1.4 By 2000 the economic problems of Hastings had been firmly acknowledged by the Government. Hastings had been given substantial support through the Single Regeneration Budget regime together with Objective 2 status. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation showed Hastings to be the most deprived town in the South East.

2.1.5 The Hastings and Bexhill bypasses, promoted by the Highways Agency as a strategic roads improvement, were strongly supported locally because they were seen as offering an opportunity to regenerate the area.

2.1.6 In 2001, following the Access to Hastings Multi-Modal Study, the Secretary of State turned down the bypasses. His decision was based on environmental grounds but he made it clear that regenerating Hastings remained vital. In a written answer to a Parliamentary Question, he stated:

*“I believe, therefore, we must look for alternative means to prevent the further decline of the area and to optimise its economic potential. Regeneration is an important priority for the Government – some wards in Hastings suffer from the most severe deprivation in England. But we do not believe the bypasses are the solution. A regeneration strategy for Hastings needs to be developed which shows clearly how transport and other measures may be implemented to ensure a sustainable economic future for the area. I have asked my officials to work closely with the South East England Development Agency and local partners on that.”*

## **2.2 The Hastings and Bexhill Task Force**

2.2.1 In response to this need to look for an alternative means of achieving the regeneration objectives for the area, the Hastings and Bexhill Task Force was established soon afterwards, led by SEEDA (South East England Development Agency).

2.2.2 The Task Force was, and still is, a broad partnership of key local and regional organisations within the housing, economic, social and educational fields. The lead partners are: SEEDA; East Sussex County Council; Hastings Borough Council; Rother District Council; English Partnerships; GOSE (Government Office for the South East) and the two local MPs.

2.2.3 Based on an economic examination carried out by DTZ Pida and intensive work by the Task Force partners, the now well established Five Point Plan for regeneration emerged.

2.2.4 The then Planning Minister, Lord Falconer was briefed on progress late in 2001 and in March 2002, the Government announced its backing for the £400 million 10-year strategy, awarding £38 million of new money to support it during its first three years.

## **2.3 The Five Point Plan**

2.3.1 The Five Point Plan is formed around five themes:

- Urban Renaissance
- Excellence in Education
- Support for Business
- Broadband Connectivity
- Transport Improvements

2.3.2 The Transport theme identified a range of improvement measures including the concept of a local Link Road to overcome the poor connections between Hastings and Bexhill:

*“Relieving pressure on the A259 (Bexhill Road) through a combination of better train services, new stations, enhanced bus links between Hastings and Bexhill, and improvements to the road network including a possible link road.”<sup>1</sup>*

2.3.3 Towards the end of 2002, strong public endorsement for the regeneration initiative was confirmed through a large-scale community consultation.

## **2.4 South Coast Multi-Modal Study**

2.4.1 Also during 2002, the Government-commissioned South Coast Multi-Modal Study (SoCoMMS) was carried out. The Five Point Plan transport package, including the Link Road proposals, was explored and tested as part of the wider coastal study. The Secretary of State’s decision on SoCoMMS in July 2003 gave specific attention to Hastings and the Bexhill-Hastings Link Road:

*“The Multi-Modal Study has recommended one local road to be taken forward: the Bexhill-Hastings Link Road. This scheme is part of the package of regeneration measures for Hastings which is being developed following our decisions on the Access to Hastings Multi-Modal Study announced in July 2001. The Secretary of State recognises that this road will have some impact on the environment. He is therefore asking East Sussex County Council to work closely with the statutory environmental bodies in developing this scheme in more detail, in order to minimise the environmental impacts. Further consideration will be given to funding in the light of the performance of the scheme against our appraisal criteria including environmental impacts.”*

## **2.5 The Link Road**

2.5.1 Having been charged with taking this local road scheme forward, East Sussex County Council commenced work on the design by preparing a range of route options and, in early 2004, a widespread public consultation was undertaken to gauge opinion on them – over 2500 responses were received. From this process emerged the preferred route which was submitted to the Government for consideration as part of the Local Transport Plan submission.

2.5.2 In December 2004, the Government announced provisional approval for the Link Road scheme. Since that time, design work has continued - and culminated in the submission of the current planning application.

2.5.3 The scheme is also included among the transport priorities for the period 2006-2011 in the Government’s Regional Funding Allocation for the South East which was announced in July 2006.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: “You and your future in Hastings and Bexhill” – Information leaflet issued by the Task Force in February 2002.

## 2.6 Five Point Plan Progress

2.6.1 The Five Point Plan has been translated into a Business Plan which was approved by the DTI in November 2003. It provides for a £341m package of projects over 10 years and targets of delivering 5700 jobs and 100,000m<sup>2</sup> of new business and education space in Hastings and Bexhill.

2.6.2 The majority of funding will come from the private sector over the long term. In the early years however, significant investment has been made by Government sources to establish the programme and attract private investors. Around £85m has been spent or is committed (to 2008) to direct expenditure by the Task Force through its regeneration company Sea Space. This is augmented by a further £220m being delivered by other Task Force partners in housing, education and transport (including the Link Road). Figure 1 illustrates the emergence of a strategic economic corridor between Bexhill and Hastings within which many of the development initiatives are located.

2.6.3 Early progress on the ground is starting to have an impact:

- Hastings town centre has its new University Centre, the two Creative Media Centre buildings and a new £9m railway station. Construction of the Lacuna Place office development is underway and work on the new main FE College will start this summer.
- Elsewhere, the Innovation Centre opened in 2006 and the Marina Pavilion revamp and conversion is underway. Restoration of the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill was completed in 2006 and establishment of the new Pebsham Countryside Park is moving ahead. Land in the Ore Valley has been remediated and prepared for the Millennium Community development.

2.6.4 The combination of strong national and regional public sector commitment to Hastings and Bexhill, and visible physical improvements have made a big difference to investor confidence in the area as evidenced in the following examples:

- Following the Government's support for the area, Hastings saw some of the fastest property price rises of any coastal town in 2003/04.
- Business rentals achieved in the Media and Innovation Centres are well above previously prevailing levels.
- The gap between income levels in Hastings and the regional average is beginning to narrow.

2.6.5 These are all signs that the multi-agency comprehensive approach to regeneration of the area is succeeding. This is endorsed by local commercial property agent Gary Dyer of Dyer Commercial:

*"Since the Task Force began its work in 2003 we have experienced a significant uplift in confidence by the business and investment sectors and the general perception of Hastings continues to improve. Previously any prospects for expansion were severely hampered by outdated business space, forcing existing companies to consider relocating and making the town unattractive to potential new employers."*

2.6.6 However, the momentum now started has to be sustained and all the components of intervention are inter-dependent. Above all, business and investor confidence has to be upheld.

### **3. Scheme Context**

#### **3.1 Description of the Scheme and its Setting**

3.1.1 The coastal towns of Hastings and Bexhill lay on the edge of undulating High Weald countryside. Most of the High Weald is a nationally important Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and this almost immediately joins the built-up area on the north of Hastings. Even though the countryside immediately to the north and east of Bexhill is not AONB it is of significant landscape quality and distinctive character and contains the Combe Haven and Marline Valley Woods SSSIs. The County Council has therefore placed high importance upon the environmental design of the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road, to minimise impact upon the environment and enable this essential road development to be assimilated into the local area

3.1.2 The western end of the scheme would start at the southern end of London Road where it meets the A259 Trunk Road. It would use the route of a former railway line, running approximately parallel with London Road, passing under Woodsgate Park and Ninfield Road up to the west of Glovers Farm. This section is the urban part of the Scheme which would be designed as a conventional two lane road but it would not be an urban street. There would be no footways or pedestrian access to the route of the road and only street lighting around the road junction with London Road and Belle Hill. There would be a new underpass at Chapel Path, to provide a safe access to the schools, and bridges at Woodsgate Park Road, Ninfield Road and Glovers Farm would be rebuilt.

3.1.3 The eastern end of the Scheme would be at Queensway, just north of the existing junction with Crowhurst Road. Between Glovers Farm and Queensway the scheme would pass through countryside with the proposed Pebsham Countryside Park laying mainly to the south. Along this stretch of the route the road would be a single 10m wide carriageway.

3.1.4 From Glovers Farm the Scheme would run northwards across the head of the Combe Haven valley where it would cross the stream on a new low bridge. The road would then stay as low as possible in the landscape and run through a new cutting to the west of Actons Farm. It would then swing east to cross the Watermill valley before entering another new cutting near the foot of the ridge from Hillcroft Farm.

3.1.5 Next it would cross the southern end of the Powdermill Valley just south of Adams Farm. Here the road itself would be relatively low in the landscape but it would be accompanied by significant landscaping, particularly on the north side, to help reduce noise and visual impact.

3.1.6 To the east of Adams Farm the road would enter a new deep cutting as it crosses the alignment of the disused railway. On emerging from the east end of the cutting, it would cross Decoy Farm on an embankment, north of Decoy Pond Wood. The section of the road between here and Upper Wilting Farm would be in shallow cutting and would be sufficiently steep to warrant a climbing lane.

3.1.7 The Scheme would cross over Crowhurst Road with no connection between them. Crowhurst Road would need to be realigned in order to gain sufficient headroom for traffic using the country lane under the new road.

3.1.8 There is then a steep valley between Upper Wilting Farm and Queensway, which contains the London to Hastings railway line. The Scheme would therefore involve constructing a large embankment across the valley, a bridge over the railway and a further cutting to reach Queensway.

3.1.9 Along the rural section of the Scheme there would be a new path for walkers, cyclists and horse riders (the Greenway). It would serve both those seeking a direct route from North Bexhill to North Hastings and those wanting to enjoy the countryside. It would be designed to link to all the crossings of existing Public Rights of Way and any paths that may be created as part of the Pebsham Countryside Park.

3.1.10 The route of the Scheme would cross several Public Rights of Way, including a branch of the 1066 Country Walk, long distance footpath. The continuity of all the paths would be maintained, although some minor diversions would be required in some cases.

3.1.11 The Scheme would avoid direct impact upon the Combe Haven Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the Marline Valley Woods SSSI.

3.1.12 The Scheme incorporates areas of habitat creation (on the ratio of 2 for 1) as replacement of those areas to be lost. Many of these areas would also be used for other purposes, including storage of flood water and as a source of soils for the Scheme construction.

## **4. Planning context**

### **4.1 Overall Context**

4.1.1 The development and regeneration strategies for the eastern part of East Sussex are set within national policy statements, regional spatial strategies, structure plans and local development plans.

## **4.2 Objectives for Sustainability**

4.2.1 The development strategies for the Bexhill and Hastings area at regional/sub regional and local level are driven by the national objective to secure a sustainable pattern of development. National planning policy establishes the preference for urban areas as locations for strategic development, given their accessibility to jobs and services, availability of existing infrastructure, and accessibility to public transport.

4.2.2 Integral to this drive for sustainability is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent home which they can afford, in a community where they want to live (PPS3) and that the locational needs of businesses are taken into account whilst observing environmental considerations, minimising the need to travel and avoiding unacceptable congestion (PPG4).

4.2.3 This policy approach to defining the pattern of development is influenced by environmental objectives such as the protection afforded to nationally designated landscapes, habitat designations and the countryside in general.

## **4.3 Regional Policy**

4.3.1 Current and emerging regional guidance (South East Regional Planning Guidance Note 9 (including subsequent alterations) (RPG9) and the draft South East Plan (SEP)) emphasises the need to encourage economic success, enhance the environment, promote social inclusion and ensure that development patterns are sustainable. In other words, the national policy preference for urban areas is reinforced.

4.3.2 This principle is encapsulated in the Regional Transport Strategy's (RPG9) regional hub concept; ie those centres of economic activity and population which are regionally/sub regionally significant in terms of the provision of services, and that possess key transport interchanges.

4.3.3 Chapter 12 of RPG9 identifies the Sussex Coast and Towns Priority Area for Economic Regeneration (PAER) as extending from Shoreham Harbour to Hastings. It notes that the coastal towns contain significant pockets of deprivation and unemployment associated with the decline of the traditional tourist industry as well as the mismatch between the pool of labour and available jobs. The objective is to raise economic performance in the area and, as RPG9 states (at paragraph 9.89) the role of transport in this is important. It is noted (at para 12.22) that joint working is required to develop complementary strategies through development plans, local transport plans and other strategies to bring about the regeneration of the area whilst respecting the environment.

4.3.4 The Regional Spatial Strategy (RPG9 and its draft replacement the SEP) is complemented by the Regional Economic Strategy 2006-2016 (RES). It identifies three challenges for the region: The Global Challenge, Smart Growth and Sustainable Prosperity. The regeneration of coastal towns forms an important component in meeting the latter two.

4.3.5 In the RES, the Coastal South East is recognised as having many strengths but also low economic performance, low skills and poor connectivity. Releasing its untapped economic potential is seen as crucial to the wider performance of the region. Among the interventions proposed for addressing this are:

- urban renaissance,
- raising learning and skills,
- providing employment land, and
- improving connectivity.

4.3.6 Specifically it is recognised that:

*“Hastings and Bexhill remain the focus for a major ten year programme of regeneration and investment in its five point plan for growth”.*<sup>2</sup>

#### **4.4 Sub regional objectives for regeneration and growth**

4.4.1 The draft SEP’s Sussex Coast sub regional strategy updates and extends the PAER and provides a bespoke set of policies aimed at addressing the particular social and economic issues faced by the area. Transport, mobility and access to services are themes intrinsic to a strategy which seeks to deliver a step change in the economic performance of the sub region. Regional Planning Guidance identifies the Link Road as infrastructure essential to the long term needs of the area<sup>3</sup>. This commitment is reiterated in the SEP’s sub regional strategy<sup>4</sup>. The Scheme should also be considered as providing the foundation for an integrated package of transport measures that can be delivered over time as the area develops. Without it, policies of integration and modal shift will be severely hindered.

4.4.2 The draft SEP also identifies Hastings as a Regional Hub. The Hub concept promotes large population centres as appropriate locations of strategic growth given their role as employment, service and transport centres. Bexhill plays a complementary role to that of Hastings’ Hub status by providing opportunities for employment development as part of urban extensions on a scale not possible within the constrained urban area of Hastings.

4.4.3 As the lead authority, East Sussex County Council developed and refined the strategy proposals for the Sussex Coast sub-region between 2003 and 2005, in parallel with the preparation of the South East Plan. This work was undertaken on an open and inclusive basis, involving representatives of economic, environmental and community sector partners, as well as all the local planning authorities. Both Hastings Borough and Rother District Councils have confirmed their support for the objectives and policies of the sub regional strategy in their formal representations on the South East Plan.

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<sup>2</sup> Regional Economic Strategy 2006-2016 – Chapter: Mapping the South East Economy, page 43

<sup>3</sup> Chapter 9 (July 2004) –policy T17 and table 4 page 44

<sup>4</sup> Policy SCT9 and Implementation Plan - Sub regional Investment Framework (Sussex Coast)

## **4.5 Local Plan Objectives**

4.5.1 The draft SEP proposes a level of housing provision for each district in the south east for the plan period 2006 – 2026. Policy H1 proposes 5,600 dwellings in Rother as a whole, and 4,200 for Hastings over this 20 year period. Of the 5,600 dwellings proposed for Rother, 4000 are to be provided in Bexhill and the surrounding area as part of the Sussex Coast sub-region (Policy SCT7). Taking into account development already planned for (including North East Bexhill) and windfall expectations, there remains a residual requirement of 1,000 dwellings over the plan period for this area.

4.5.2 The Rother District Local Plan, alongside the strategic housing allocation, allocates land for 48,000 m<sup>2</sup> of business floor space at North East Bexhill which contributes significantly to Structure Plan requirements for the eastern part of the county. Development of this scale and nature will complement efforts to regenerate the economy of Hastings, indeed the development strategies of both Bexhill and Hastings can be considered as being mutually supportive.

4.5.3 Without the Link Road, however, the North East Bexhill allocation cannot be released for development; this will lead to the failure of the Rother District Local Plan. The Highways Agency has indicated that this strategic allocation would place unacceptable pressures on the A259 trunk road, if it were proposed without the Link Road. An alternative development strategy not focused on Bexhill will invite greater environmental damage by redirecting development pressures to neighbouring rural areas (much of which is designated as part of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty); placing additional stresses on infrastructure and service provision; and will do nothing to achieve a better balance between jobs and homes.

4.5.4 Not providing the Link Road will also lead to adverse impacts on the regeneration of the area. The Five Point Plan (and the investment in the area) has been developed on the assumption that a combination of employment opportunities created at North East Bexhill and increased business confidence will bring about a change in economic circumstances. The Link Road is integral to regeneration strategies in the area, but without it the momentum already generated will stall.

4.5.5 The adverse effects of not developing the Link Road are not restricted to the development strategy; in addition, the regeneration objectives of the Hastings Borough Local Plan and the Five Point Plan will fail.

4.5.6 It should also be recognised that the implications of failing to deliver the link road will be felt at the strategic and regional level. Bexhill is one of only two strategic locations for development in East Sussex, without it the development strategies of the Structure Plan, the Sussex Coast Sub Regional Strategy, and (by extension) those of the current and draft RSS will be placed in jeopardy.

## **5. The Case for the Scheme**

### **5.1 The Regeneration Case**

5.1.1 The Link Road scheme is primarily a regeneration scheme and an integral part of the package of measures within the agreed Five Point Plan being actively pursued by the Task Force and its associated partnership of local and regional stakeholders. The fact that the Five Point Plan is backed by Government gives it greater weight.

5.1.2 The Regeneration Area (RA) to which these measures apply covers Bexhill and Hastings and the key regeneration objectives are:

- To support the economic growth in the RA by tackling congestion on the A259 and enabling the development of strategic employment and housing land by opening up the northern areas of Bexhill and Hastings; and,
- To support the regeneration areas of these towns by improving accessibility to new employment opportunities particularly benefiting the residents of the More Deprived Wards in Bexhill and Hastings.

5.1.3 An assessment of the potential regeneration impacts of the scheme has been undertaken and the findings are reported in the Regeneration Statement (RS) that accompanies the planning application.

5.1.4 The RS concludes that the proposed Scheme is a necessary condition for the facilitation of both large-scale additional employment and housing in the RA. The RS demonstrates that the Scheme has the potential to facilitate some 3,000 new jobs (as well as safeguarding existing private sector jobs) and 1,600 new housing units in the RA in the period to 2025. The RS further demonstrates that at least 900 of the new jobs will be taken by residents in the More Deprived Wards of the RA.

5.1.5 As stated in paragraphs 2.6.3 - 2.6.6 above, promoting and maintaining business confidence is also a key element of any successful regeneration scheme and Bexhill-Hastings is no exception in this respect. It is clear that business confidence received a boost when the Five Point Plan was first agreed and the first fruits of that plan started to emerge. Building on that momentum is the current challenge and from the discussions undertaken by the consultants carrying out the assessment there are clear indications that business confidence will be significantly damaged in the event that the scheme does not proceed and employment opportunities and housing foregone on this scale will have serious socio-economic implications to economic development and regeneration in the RA.

5.1.6 Without the Scheme, the potential to tackle comprehensively the deep-rooted problems of deprivation in the RA will be severely hindered and the achievement of optimal value from existing and future regeneration programmes will be prejudiced.

5.1.7 The Regeneration Case for the scheme is clearly made. The scheme achieves the regeneration objectives to support economic growth in Bexhill and Hastings and improve accessibility to new employment opportunities in the two towns. For the scheme not to go ahead would be a serious obstacle to the ability to build on the progress already made.

## **5.2 The Planning Case**

5.2.1 The Link Road is integral to the development strategy of the Bexhill Hastings area, as it releases much needed development land in Rother District and contributes to and maintains the momentum of regeneration efforts in the area. It is clear that the Link Road is a key component of the development plan for the area which is expressed in the cascade of plans from the Regional Spatial Strategy, the county's Structure Plan and the adopted Local Plans. Direct support is also expressed in the Regional Economic Strategy proposed by the Regional Development Agency and in the county's Local Transport Plan.

5.2.2 The benefits of the Link Road identified in these strategies, include;

- Strategic development at Bexhill will assist in delivering much needed housing, 35% of which will be "affordable housing" in line with the draft South East Plan requirements;
- Housing provided as part of urban extensions such as North East Bexhill can be integrated within master planned neighbourhoods with high levels of accessibility to services;
- With the High Weald AONB, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and the English Channel preventing the outward growth of Hastings, development at Bexhill takes on an increasing importance in the regeneration of the area; and,
- North East Bexhill provides the opportunity to develop high quality business premises which are accessible and designed to a standard which suits modern business needs.

5.2.3 By allowing development to be focused on Bexhill the Link Road promotes the regeneration of the area, avoids the need to release significant quantities of housing land in the High Weald AONB, and enables a pattern of development which is the most sustainable given the constraints that face East Sussex.

5.2.4 Several planning policy documents such as the Rother District Local Plan have assumed the Scheme as part of their forward thinking and so, not to develop the Scheme would frustrate those plans and possibly lead to greater pressures for development in the nationally important AONB.

## **5.3 The Transport Case**

5.3.1 Although this scheme is aimed primarily at regeneration it is important that the transport implications are understood and can be demonstrated to be acceptable within the context of the whole project.

5.3.2 The traffic levels predicted with the scheme in place show large reductions in traffic along the A259 Glyne Gap between Bexhill and Hastings and a reduction in traffic volumes on the A259 seafront route through Hastings. Traffic would also reduce on the Harley Shute Road and on the A2036 on the east side of Bexhill, together with a significant reduction on rural roads to the north of Bexhill and Hastings. This would result in less traffic through local villages, including Crowhurst and through Battle.

5.3.3 A relatively small overall increase in traffic is predicted on the highway network with the new road in place and specifically traffic is forecast to increase on some roads in Bexhill parallel to and approaching the new Link Road. Within Hastings, traffic levels along the B2092 Queensway and B2093 The Ridge are forecast to increase, with the increased number of trips between Bexhill and Hastings resulting in traffic increases in the Hollington area of Hastings.

5.3.4 In order to ensure that the early benefits from the new road are not eroded through time, ESCC has committed to provide a series of complementary measures within Bexhill and Hastings. These will be provided through the Local Transport Plan programme.

5.3.5 Overall, the Scheme would result in improved journey speeds, reliability and reduced delays at junctions on the A259 between the two towns. There would also be significant reductions in delays at junctions on the approach to Battle on the A2100 and at the junction of the B2204 with the A269 at Bexhill.

5.3.6 Bus journey times would improve considerably along the A259 corridor between the two towns, with bus priority measures expected to be implemented some time after the opening of the Scheme helping to secure these benefits for the future.

5.3.7 Despite the overall small increase in traffic as a result of the scheme, accidents and casualties would be reduced once the new road is opened as traffic switches from roads with high accident rates onto the Link Road. Over a 60 year period the scheme has been forecast to result in a reduction in nearly 900 accidents and 1,300 associated casualties equating to a saving of an average of 15 accidents per year. In economic terms these represent a saving to the County of £1.35m pa.

5.3.8 Overall, and purely from a transport perspective, the new road achieves significant reductions in traffic along the A259 and completes a spine route for the strategic economic corridor as shown in Figure 1. More specifically, it provides a primary access for the North East Bexhill development area. The benefits achieved are to be “locked in” through the commitment by ESCC to provide complementary traffic measures around the wider Bexhill and Hastings area.

## **5.4 The Environmental Case**

5.4.1 Any development of a new road has environmental implications and it is the role of the Environmental Statement (ES) to report the findings of the EIA

process which identifies the significant effects, both positive and negative, that are predicted to result.

5.4.2 From the outset, ESCC and their advisors recognised the sensitivity of the area through which the new road needs to pass, if it is to fulfil its objectives and assist in facilitating the regeneration that all would wish to see in the area. Indeed, the potential for adverse environmental effects was recognised explicitly in the Secretary of State's decision on SoCoMMS when he asked ESCC to work closely with the statutory environmental bodies in developing the scheme, as noted in paragraph 2.4.1 above.

5.4.3 The design developed since that time, including the route options stage, has taken this fully into account. It has sought to minimise the adverse impacts of the scheme on the various environmental resources wherever this has been practicable. Considerable mitigation measures have been incorporated into the design as it has progressed and commitments have been made by ESCC in respect of both the construction and operation of the new road in order to address environmental issues that have been identified.

5.4.4 While there remain some significant adverse environmental effects in respect of some environmental topic areas, such as agriculture, landscape and visual impacts, there are also significant environmental benefits in respect of others, such as social and community, planning policy and travel and transport.

5.4.5 Taking all of the various factors into account the ES reports that the scheme will have:

- an overall minor to moderate adverse environmental effect in the year of opening; which reduces to
- a negligible effect by the Design Year (15 years after opening) when the mitigation planting matures sufficiently better to enclose the scheme and new ecological habitats become established.

## **6. Conclusions**

### **6.1 Origins and Objectives**

6.1.1 The origins of the Scheme lie in the development of the transport element of the Five Point Plan drawn up by the Hastings and Bexhill Task Force. This was seen as a local link road between the two towns. The Task Force was set up in response to Government's requirements, following the completion of the Access to Hastings Multi-Modal Study, to develop a regeneration strategy for the area.

6.1.2 The Five Point Plan, including the Scheme, was explored and tested as part of the wider South Coast Multi-Modal Study which was completed in 2002. Following this, the Secretary of State for Transport asked East Sussex County Council to develop the Scheme further and work closely with the statutory environmental bodies in so doing.

6.1.3 The objectives of the Scheme are to contribute towards the Five Point Plan by improving overall accessibility and to enable the housing and commercial developments which are dependent upon the road to be realised. Other objectives are related to reducing congestion and accidents, facilitating improvements in public transport, minimising the impact on the environmentally sensitive areas in the Combe Haven valley, reducing community severance and improving air quality, particularly on the existing A259.

## **6.2 Context**

6.2.1 The Scheme runs from the southern end of London Road at its junction with the A259 Trunk Road in Bexhill to a new junction with the B2092 Queensway in Hastings just north of its existing junction with Crowhurst Road. It is effectively divided into an urban section between London Road and Glovers Farm and a rural section between there and Queensway.

6.2.2 The Scheme occupies the line of a disused railway in its urban section and crosses the Combe Haven and Powdermill valleys in the rural area. It was recognised from the outset that the road would cross environmentally sensitive areas and so considerable effort has been made to do this as sympathetically as possible in line with the Secretary of State's instruction to minimise the impact of the Scheme on the environment.

6.2.3 The main thrust of planning policies in the area is to facilitate much needed regeneration for the area and the Scheme is in line with these policies at a national, regional and local level. Indeed, some planning policies have assumed the existence of the link road and so would be frustrated if the Scheme were not now to be built.

## **6.3 The Case for the Scheme**

6.3.1 The Scheme is primarily a regeneration scheme and is an integral part of a package of measures within the Five Point Plan for the area as a whole. It achieves the regeneration objectives to support economic growth in Bexhill and Hastings and to improve accessibility to new employment opportunities in the two towns. For the Scheme not to go ahead would be a serious obstacle to the ability to build on the progress made to date. The regeneration case for the Scheme is clear.

6.3.2 The Scheme is integral to the development strategy for the Bexhill Hastings area and is a key component of the development plan for the area which is expressed in a cascade of plans from the Regional Spatial Strategy, the County Structure Plan and local adopted plans. Support is also expressed in the Regional Economic Strategy and the county's Local Transport Plan. The planning case for the Scheme is clear.

6.3.3 The Scheme achieves significant reductions in traffic along the existing A259 at Glyne Gap and at the seafront in Hastings and on rural roads to the north of the two towns and in Crowhurst and through Battle. It improves journey times and facilitates greater reliability in respect of bus journey times between the two towns and is forecast to reduce accidents in the area. The transportation case for the Scheme is clear.

6.3.4 Any development of a new road has environmental implications and from the outset the County Council has sought to minimise the environmental effects of the scheme in line with the Secretary of State's instruction in 2003. The Environmental Impact Assessment undertaken for the Scheme has concluded that there will be an overall minor to moderate adverse effect on the environment at the time of the Scheme opening which will reduce to a negligible overall effect at the Design Year (15 years after opening) when the mitigation planting has matured sufficiently to better enclose the Scheme and new ecological habitats have become established. The environmental case for the Scheme is therefore considered to be broadly neutral in the longer term.

6.3.5 Overall, the case in favour of this vital piece of transport infrastructure is clear and its impact on the Bexhill Hasting area as a whole will be very positive.

