

Bexhill to Hastings Link Road:

Chapter 4: History of the Scheme

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4 History of the Scheme

4.1 Scheme Development

Introduction

4.1.1 In order to appreciate how alternatives have been considered and how the process has led to the development of the Scheme which is now the subject of the planning application, it is necessary to understand the history of the Scheme and the historical context of the decisions that have been made to date.

4.1.2 It can be argued that the origins of the Scheme lie in the recognition over 40 years ago that the tourist industry was in a decline that was unlikely to reverse, and that the demographic structure of the area was skewed towards a larger proportion of elderly people. Although the term regeneration did not perhaps have the currency then that it does now, it was that need that drove much of the planning policy and development plans at the time and since.

4.1.3 In parallel with this, it was also recognised that the problems of connectivity between Bexhill, Hastings and other parts of the South East and between the two towns themselves were a major part of the overall economic and structural problems. Various studies and policies have addressed these issues and these are central to the history of the Scheme addressed in the following sections.

Hastings Town Development Scheme

4.1.4 During the 1960s and 1970s, Hastings was already perceived as having a relatively weak economy. In the 1970s the Town Development Act Scheme was approved for Hastings as a conscious effort to restructure the town and to address particular issues at the time including a significantly aging population living in the town and a declining tourism industry on which Hastings had depended for over 100 years.

4.1.5 The Strategic Plan for the South East (1970) noted that Eastbourne and Hastings, with Bexhill and Rye are largely self-contained towns, without populous hinterlands. It stated that the Structure Plan should provide for a moderate rate of growth of population, which could assist in achieving a better balance in the areas' age structure and that there should be some inward movement of employment related to any approved Town Development Act Scheme. The Plan suggested a growth of about 4,000 persons per annum up to 1981 and a similar or higher rate for the rest of the century.

4.1.6 In 1971 an agreement was concluded with the Greater London Council (GLC) for a Town Development Scheme. This made financial and other arrangements for the planned movement of some 18,000 people and 7,000 jobs to the Town Development Area (TDA), on the north western edge of Hastings. In recognition of the self containment of the towns, the Structure

Plan developed a strategy for the Bexhill and Hastings area. The two main issues addressed by the 1st Structure Plan for the area in 1975 were:

- Is it possible to stimulate more employment in the area so as to increase prosperity and thereby encourage renewal and repair of the urban fabric of Hastings, and to go some way towards encouraging a more balanced age structure in Bexhill?
- What development policies are needed beyond existing permissions and the completion of the Hastings Town Development Scheme?

4.1.7 In essence the strategy developed had two parts. Firstly it was considered that the impact the TDA could have by way of generating prosperity and helping to pay for renewal of the urban fabric would not be felt quickly enough. In addition, the holiday industry was unlikely to grow again to any great extent.

4.1.8 A further boost was needed, which could come from improved road and rail communications and from promotion of development opportunities in a wider market. It was considered continued Government help would be needed in allowing suitable employment growth. To avoid prejudicing the completion of the private sector part of the TDA, the early release of more development land was not to be made.

4.1.9 As a second part of the strategy, it was considered that the expected completion of the TDA towards the end of the 1980s might create pressure for further growth which should not be held back by any shortage of development land. It was proposed therefore in the longer term to release land north of Bexhill to accommodate up to 20,000 households, but only after substantial completion of the TDA. Underlying this two-pronged strategy was the assumption that growth bringing more jobs would bring net benefit to the area and that growth should be related to jobs to help achieve a better age balance.

Main Road Proposals Serving the TDA

4.1.10 The A259 between Bexhill and Hastings is the only direct road connecting the two towns. By the mid 1970's, it was acknowledged to be congested and therefore land for road schemes was reserved in the 1975 County Structure Plan in relation to the Hastings Town Development Scheme. As part of the TDA, the following roads were to be constructed:

- Hastings TDA Spine Road to provide access to the Development Area and later to form part of the new primary road network (Queensway); and,
- Hastings Spur Road (HSR) from the Spine Road to form a new primary access to Hastings and lorry route.

4.1.11 In addition, land may be required for the following schemes, dependent on further consideration of transportation studies and whether it is decided whether or not to proceed with these schemes:

- Access to Hastings Spine Road connection to A21;
- Bohemia to Town centre;

- Hastings Town centre relief road;
- Bexhill Northern Approach Road (BNAR) to serve as access to development and part of a possible Bexhill bypass and lorry route; and,
- A269 Bexhill new north/south route.

4.1.12 The County Council's main road proposals for the TDA included the Hastings Spine Road (Queensway) serving the TDA and the HSR linking this area to the town. The HSR proposed upgrading of Gillsman's Hill to provide a major new access to Hastings via the Spine Road. However, at the Examination in Public, Hastings Borough Council (HBC) expressed anxiety about the scheme and its potential impact on the town centre and residential areas and proposed instead a bypass north of Hastings from Ebdens Hill to Guestling Thorn.

4.1.13 Rother District Council (RDC) supported the proposal for a bypass north of the Bexhill and saw it closely related to the proposed growth of the town on its north side. They were opposed to the idea of a link between the TDA and Glyne Gap. The Panel agreed with the view that a link from the A259 at Glyne Gap, the Hastings Spine and Spur Roads would have some very undesirable consequences in introducing more heavy traffic in the absence of a bypass.

4.1.14 However, the economic recession and the change of policy by the GLC in the mid-1970s to discontinue the planned movement of people to Hastings, slowed down the rate of development. The Structure Plan set out that Government help was needed, not only to help Hastings with its problems, but also the whole of the Hastings/Bexhill areas if it was to play its part in the proposed medium growth area for Eastbourne/Hastings - as set out in the Strategic Plan for the South East (ESCC, County Structure Plan 1978).

4.1.15 The 1982 Structure Plan proposed (Policy HBA11) to release land north of Bexhill for development and to construct a main road which could serve the proposed development and be incorporated into a northern bypass to Bexhill and Hastings. Policy HBA13 proposed a new A259 road bypassing both Bexhill and Hastings. It was viewed that such a route would relieve the congestion on the A259 between the two towns, and improve communications between Bexhill and Hastings by providing a second major highway link between them, and giving much better access to the Hastings TDA from the west. In addition, Bexhill would have an improved connection to the A21 trunk route to London via the bypass.

4.1.16 The proposal for an allocation to provide a main road servicing the proposed north Bexhill development which could also be incorporated as a northern by-pass of Bexhill connecting with the Hastings Town Development road (Queensway) was taken forward in subsequent Structure Plans and the BNAR was also proposed in the 1982 Structure Plan (Policy HBA15). This road followed an alignment from the A259 King Offa Way/A269 London Road junction along a disused railway and continued northwards for about 1.5km to link with the proposed areas of development.

4.1.17 The Third Alteration to the Structure Plan reduced the longer term development north of Bexhill for 20,000 households in favour of a smaller

development (1,000-1,500 households) at Worsham, north-east of Bexhill. Further alteration to the Structure Plan was made that development to the north-east of Bexhill in the Worsham area would not commence until a new road from the Hastings Spine Road at Upper Wilting to the A2036 was made available. The County Council considered that this route, as well as providing access to the development, could form the first stage of the Bexhill-Hastings bypass.

4.1.18 The remainder of the bypass could be considered in three sections: from Sidley (A2036) to the A259 west of Bexhill, from the TDA to the A21, and from the A21 to the east of Hastings. This stage of the bypass could be complemented by the construction of the BNAR.

A259 Bexhill and Hastings Western and Eastern Bypasses

4.1.19 By the late 1970s, the Department for Transport (DfT) was actively considering bypasses for Bexhill and Hastings. The 2nd Structure Plan in 1978 identified that the Department of Environment was carrying out feasibility studies to investigate the need for bypasses to Bexhill and Hastings.

4.1.20 The Bexhill and Hastings Western bypass was put into the Government's road building programme in June 1985, for a start period in April 1989 onwards. The bypass was seen to partly implement the Structure Plan policy for a full bypass of both towns. However, it was not until December 1990 that the DfT announced its preferred route for the Western bypass following public consultation in 1989. The DfT envisaged a start on building the bypass in late 1995 and completion in late 1997.

4.1.21 A preferred route for the Eastern bypass was announced in June 1991 following public consultation in 1990. Publication of draft Line and Side Roads Orders for both schemes was in September 1994 with the draft Compulsory Purchase Orders published in March 1995.

4.1.22 The Bexhill and Hastings Western bypass ran between the A259 at Hooe to the west of Bexhill and to the A21 north of Hastings. The Hastings Eastern bypass ran between the A21 north of Hastings and the A259 east of Hastings. The Western bypass utilised the general alignment of Queensway and the remainder of both routes would be on new alignments around the edges of the urban areas. Together the two schemes would provide a complete trunk road bypass to the Bexhill and Hastings urban area.

4.1.23 East Sussex County Council (ESCC) supported the principal of the DfT's bypasses and viewed that the A259 Bexhill and Hastings Western Bypass, together with the BNAR, would have a number of important benefits:

- Together with other improvements to the South Coast Trunk Road the bypass would improve the accessibility of the Bexhill and Hastings area;
- The bypass and link roads would provide improved connections between Bexhill and Hastings for local traffic;

- The bypass and BNAR would provide the opportunity to unlock land suitable for development which could help meet the economic, employment and housing needs of the area; and,
- The existing A259 through Bexhill and Hastings would be relieved of traffic and allow an improvement of the urban environment.

BNAR and Hastings Spur Road - Phase 2

4.1.24 The BNAR was promoted by ESCC to give access from Bexhill to the DfT's proposed A259 Bexhill and Hastings Western Bypass. Public consultation into options for alternative alignments and junctions for the BNAR was carried out in September 1991 by ESCC. The results were reported to the County Council's Highways and Transportation Committee in March 1992. The report also considered an alternative route corridor known as the Pebsham Link. The Committee resolved to support the BNAR as the best route corridor and to approve a particular combination of alignment and junctions. The Published Scheme was approved in 1995.

4.1.25 The road started from a junction with the A259 close to its existing junction with London Road and continued along the line of the disused railway, parallel to London Road to an intermediate roundabout junction connecting with the North East Bexhill Development. The road then continued to a junction to the north of Sidley with the proposed DfT Western bypass.

4.1.26 ESCC viewed that existing access to the TDA from the east and south was poor and needed improvement. They saw Gilsman's Hill as an integral part of the TDA road system, forming the intended Phase 2 of the HSR. The improvement would widen Gilsman's Hill to single 7.3m carriageway as necessary and the scale of improvement at the junctions at Wishing Tree and The Green have not been defined as they would be dependent on the traffic loadings of any particular strategy.

4.1.27 The BNAR and HSR Phase 2 are referred in Policy T40 of the adopted Country Structure Plan.

Access to Hastings Multi-Modal Study

4.1.28 The Hastings Eastern Bypass and Western Bypass were considered at a Public Inquiry in 1995/1996. However, following the reduction in road building introduced by the new Labour Government in 1997, and publication of the 1998 White Paper and the Roads Review *A New Deal for Trunk Roads in England*, the transport needs of the two towns were examined in a Government funded study *The Access to Hastings Multi-Modal Study*.

4.1.29 The scope and content for the A259 schemes within the study was set out in the Secretary of State's interim decision letter of July 1998, a copy of which is presented in Appendix 4-A in Volume 2. That set out his 'minded to' decision to make the orders for the A259 bypass, subject to the scheme's regeneration impact, as determined in the *Access to Hastings Multi-Modal Study*.

4.1.30 The Government's 1998 Roads Review, *A New Deal for Trunk Roads in England*, a daughter document to the White Paper *A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone*, reviewed a long list of trunk road schemes inherited from the previous administration and identified 49 schemes to which the new Government was committed to delivering. However, the Roads Review also recognised that there were many serious and urgent problems on the trunk road network which were not addressed by that programme for improvements. Many of those problems were particularly complex and therefore an initial series of multi-modal studies (MMS) was launched subsequently in 1999 to examine problems in all transport modes and to seek balanced solutions that contributed to an integrated policy by protecting the environment and supporting sustainable growth.

4.1.31 The *Access to Hastings Multi-Modal Study* commenced in November 1999 and was the first of the MMS to be commissioned. The primary aim of the study was to consider how transport could contribute to regenerating the economy of the area in and around Hastings and Bexhill, whilst minimising the impact on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. In particular, the level of priority afforded lay in the Road Review remitting four trunk road schemes to further examination in a multi-modal context:

- A259 Pevensey - Bexhill Improvement (an on-line dualling of the existing road); the Secretary of State favoured the investigation of smaller scale safety schemes;
- A259 Bexhill and Hastings Western Bypass: the Secretary of State was minded to make the order for the Bypass, subject to the results of the Access to Hastings Study;
- A259 Eastern Bypass - the Secretary of State would make the orders for the Eastern Bypass if it was clearly demonstrated that it was in the public interest and there was no practical alternative, and he had decided to make the order for the Hastings Western Bypass; and,
- A21 Tonbridge - Pembury Dualling scheme: the Secretary of State was concerned that the scheme proposed did not represent a sustainable solution to the congestion and safety problems.

4.1.32 The Study reported in 2000 and whilst the consultants concluded that the bypasses could provide between 2,500-3,000 additional jobs, they also felt that the balance of argument was such that they could not make a firm recommendation on whether the bypasses should proceed. Whilst the schemes might improve the potential for regeneration, this needed to be balanced against the Government's strong presumption against schemes that would significantly affect environmentally sensitive areas, or important species, habitats or landscapes.

4.1.33 The Steering Group, comprising all district and county councils directly involved in the study's coverage, the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA), the Highways Agency, the regional development agency, and other business and local environmental groups reached consensus on many of the recommendations of the study. However, there was not a consensus view in the Steering Group with regard to the bypass schemes. A majority considered the case was sufficiently strong to proceed, although the case was not overwhelming.

4.1.34 In 2001, the Secretary of State for Transport rejected the proposals for a Hastings and Bexhill bypass, with the view that the argument presented did not satisfactorily demonstrate that the recommended options contributed sufficiently to the regeneration of the towns and also that the options impacted adversely on the sensitive environment to the north of the towns. A copy of the Decision Letter to South East England Regional Assembly is presented in Appendix 4-A in Volume 2. The Secretary of State noted that there was a need for a substantial transport investment programme as an essential part of a wider investment programme for the area.

Hastings and Bexhill Task Force and Five Point Plan for Regeneration

4.1.35 The socio-economic problems perceived in the 1970s were solved by the TDA, which achieved its aims for balancing the age demographics of Bexhill and establishing employment areas in Hastings. By the early 1990s Hastings had been recognised as having significant problems and in 1993 was granted Assisted Area Status. This resulted in support from Government and a Single Regeneration Budget Grant of over £20 million pledged to the town. In that context, the case for the bypass was seen to help regeneration. By 1997 the campaign for regeneration gained pace. Single Regeneration Budget fund money came in to the town, and the new Government made significant investment in social regeneration through such schemes as Sure Start and the education action zone.

4.1.36 Following the Secretary of State's decision in 2001 to reject the Hastings and Bexhill Bypass proposals, the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) was given the remit to develop a regeneration strategy for Bexhill, Hastings and Rye area, which was driven by the Hastings and Bexhill Task Force, a steering committee made up of key Government funding agencies and local stakeholders.

4.1.37 The result was the Hastings and Bexhill Five Point Plan (FPP), a ten year investment programme with a £400 million strategy for regeneration, launched in March 2002. In addition, Hastings and Bexhill were recognised as priorities for regeneration by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, with the Plan securing an initial three year funding of £38 million committed through SEEDA's budget. This strategy in turn informed the Business Plan developed in 2003 by Seaspace, the regeneration company set up by the Task Force to carry forward the strategy and business plan and deliver the projects identified in the programme.

4.1.38 The Task Force considers that the Scheme is a vital component of its vision to regenerate Hastings and Bexhill. The Scheme is one of the key transport infrastructure projects which form a core element of the FPP and the Business Plan. The Scheme is seen as being vital to releasing new employment and housing land in Bexhill as well as allowing other projects, currently constrained by congestion and capacity on the A259 corridor, to be realised. Some of the developments in the 10 year programme are directly related to the Scheme and so cannot proceed in its absence, including North East Bexhill Development and a proposal for a new railway station at Wilting Farm. Other developments are likely to be restricted without the Scheme, such as:

- West St Leonards Millennium Community (highway capacity limitations); and,
- Proposed Pebsham Countryside Park (some planned recreational/sporting uses depend on improved access).

4.1.39 Most of the developments listed by the Task Force in their 10 Year programme are seen as indirectly dependent on the Scheme and in its absence are likely to:

- Take longer to develop because of reduced market interest;
- Prove more difficult to finance from the private sector funds; and,
- Attract lower quality occupiers and/or have reduced capacity.

South Coast Corridor Multi-Modal Study

4.1.40 At the same time as the Task Force were developing the FPP, the second tranche of multi-modal studies were underway. This included the South Coast Corridor Multi-Modal Study (SoCoMMS), which was commissioned in 2001, to develop a 30 year transportation strategy for the coastal corridor between Southampton and Ramsgate. The strategy was concerned with providing transport improvements that would assist regeneration areas, in particular the Priority Areas for Economic Regeneration identified by the Government Office for the South East, and reflected in the Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9), March 2001, which included Bexhill and Hastings.

4.1.41 The SoCoMMS study saw further development of the current Scheme concept. The Government had already clearly ruled out the bypass on the grounds that the recommended options did not contribute sufficiently to the regeneration of the town and that the options impacted adversely on the sensitive environment to the north of the towns and had also set clear rules on avoiding statutory designations. Within the study, a package of measures which would achieve regeneration previously sought by the bypass was developed. As part of this package a smaller and more local scheme was designed, with regard to the reasons for why the bypass had been refused. It avoided encroachment on statutory designations and was aimed at addressing the local context, which was that poor highway connectivity between the two towns remained a stumbling block to development and regeneration. This scheme between Queensway in Hastings and the A2036 in Bexhill was viewed as going some way to meeting some of the original objectives of the Hastings bypass schemes.

4.1.42 The transport strategy developed in SoCoMMS recommended one local road scheme to be taken forward: the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road (BHLR). A key finding of SoCoMMS was that a high proportion of trips in the East Sussex coastal towns were short distance and mostly between adjacent towns. The implication of this was that local transport measures such as the BHLR Scheme had a key role to play in solving local transport problems and improving accessibility.

4.1.43 SoCoMMS identified that congestion and safety problems were particularly acute between Bexhill and Hastings and that the problem would

grow worse in the future. SoCoMMS recommended that one potential solution to these problems was the provision of a direct road link between Bexhill and Hastings to alleviate local traffic problems and stimulate regeneration.

4.1.44 Further work under the *Hastings Strategy Development Plan* (HSDP), which formed part of the overall SoCoMMS study, aimed to develop the elements of the SoCoMMS Strategy proposals within the Hastings and Bexhill area, in the context of the outcome of the *Access to Hastings Study*, together with compatibility or otherwise, of the proposals in the emerging FPP.

4.1.45 The HSDP study assessed that there was a strong economic case for constructing the Scheme and concluded that despite environmental disbenefits, the Scheme was an important component of the strategy in Hastings, providing local and, potentially, strategic economic and accessibility benefits. The report also concluded that as land use developments in north Bexhill could not be accommodated without increased highway capacity, the Scheme also addressed wider economic regeneration issues. Transport modelling demonstrated that a single carriageway link road would provide sufficient capacity to relieve congestion by diverting mainly local trips whilst increasing accessibility to employment opportunities and generating a strong Benefit Cost Ratio.

Bexhill to Hastings Link Road

4.1.46 After the SoCoMMS study reported on its recommendations, the Secretary of State for Transport in July 2003 invited ESCC to develop proposals for the construction of a local link road between Bexhill and Hastings. At the same time, the Secretary of State invited the Highways Agency to liaise with ESCC and the Statutory Environmental Bodies (SEBs) in addressing issues of access between the Scheme and the A21. A copy of the Secretary of State's response to the SoCoMMS study is presented in Appendix 4-A in Volume 2.

4.1.47 The Baldslow scheme was recognised as being complementary to the Scheme. Following this invitation and with the commitment from local partners, in particular, the Task Force, ESCC started developing plans for a new Bexhill to Hastings link road which would improve access to and within Hastings and Bexhill and open up the north Bexhill and Hastings areas for development.

4.1.48 Following a wide-ranging public consultation process, a preferred route was selected and a bid prepared for submission through the Local Transport Plan (LTP) process seeking approval to develop the Scheme towards implementation. Given the sensitive nature of the natural environment through which the new road would pass, it was important that all options were developed to manage effectively the environmental impacts. This work was steered by a group comprising nominees from the SEBs, HBC, RDC and SEEDA. The SEBs were represented by Countryside Agency, English Nature, English Heritage and the Environment Agency.

4.1.49 The Sussex Coastal Towns Study, which concluded in 2004, and which provided the basis for the South East Plan sub-regional strategy,

identified the Scheme as an essential component of the overall infrastructure requirements for regeneration. The Inspector's Report (2005) on the Deposit Rother District Local Plan (2004) stated that "*the Bexhill-Hastings Link Road would similarly provide the necessary vehicular access to serve the North East Bexhill Development as a whole, relieving the congested A259 at Glyne Gap and providing a shorter and more direct route that would connect central Bexhill, the development, the northern Hastings/St Leonards employment areas and the A21 trunk road to the M25 and London.*"

4.1.50 The Rother District Local Plan has since been adopted in 2006 and safeguards the route corridor. The Plan relies on delivery of the North East Bexhill Development to achieve its strategy and the Scheme is seen as the necessary infrastructure to accommodate this development. The Scheme is essential to the development strategy of the local plan, and in its absence, unsustainable options would be likely to be taken up, including greater levels of development scattered within the AONB. Such strategic investment is not only needed to release land but also to overcome long term deficiencies in the transport network. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 5: Policy and Planning.

4.1.51 A Major Scheme Bid was submitted as part of the 2004 Annual Progress Report of the LTP to the DfT in July 2004, which subsequently received Provisional Approval as part of the December 2004 local transport settlement (refer Letter in Appendix 4-A). The last year has seen the Preferred Route Option for the Scheme go through a number of changes and these modifications are discussed in Chapter 3A: Scheme Information.

A21 Baldslow Improvement

4.1.52 Hyder Consulting (UK) Ltd is currently assisting the Highways Agency in investigating, developing and appraising suitable options for improvements at A21/A28/A2100 Baldslow junction. Work on the A21 Baldslow Junction Improvement is currently focused on developing a suitable traffic model and developing and appraising suitable options with a view towards identifying a Preferred Route for the proposed improvement. Two options are being developed:

- Option 1 – a new link between B2092 Queensway and A21 north of the A2100; and,
- Option 2 – a new link between B2092 Queensway and A21 south of the A2100.

4.1.53 In early 2006, in their advice to Ministers on regional spending priorities for the South East England Region between 2006 and 2012, the Regional Bodies identified that improvements to the A21 at Baldslow were a priority. The Secretary of State agreed that further work and assessment on this scheme was required before it could be approved and included the A21 Baldslow Junction Improvements in the indicative list of schemes for funding between 2009/10 and 2015/16. The Scheme would therefore be post 2010, and latest advice from the Highways Agency is that, if approved, it would be unlikely to be completed before 2012/13.

4.2 Alternative A259 Schemes and Selection of Preferred Route

Alternative A259 Schemes

4.2.1 The alignments for the Eastern and Western bypasses for Hastings and Bexhill were rejected by the Secretary of State in August 2001 following the *Access to Hastings Study*. As a consequence of the cancellation of the bypasses, the statutory protection of the route for the schemes in the development plans were removed and these schemes are no longer considered as options for development.

4.2.2 The A259 through Bexhill and Hastings passes through densely developed areas in both towns, along Hastings seafront, and through conservation areas in St Leonards and Hastings Old Town. *Access to Hastings* considered traffic management measures along the A259 as an alternative to the bypass schemes. The alternative considered the influence of additional highway capacity at a number of bottleneck junctions, including Little Common Roundabout and Glyne Gap roundabout. However, detailed schemes were not considered.

4.2.3 Earlier in the 1990s, in considering a transport strategy for Bexhill and Hastings, ESCC looked at an alternative A259 on-line improvement to the DfT bypass schemes. This alternative was rejected as ESCC viewed that it would not improve access to areas not served by the existing A259, particularly areas of existing and potential development on the edges of urban areas.

Selection of Preferred Route for the Scheme

4.2.4 The Secretary of State for Transport, in his brief for the Scheme in his decision letter of 2003 stressed that ESCC should work closely with the SEBs in developing this Scheme in more detail, in order to minimise the potential environmental impacts. This requirement was developed further in consultation with the DfT to mean that environmentally designated areas, and in particular the Combe Haven SSSI, should not be directly impacted by the Scheme.

4.2.5 Six alternative route options were developed in 2003-04 to meet these objectives in partnership with SEEDA, RDC and HBC and in liaison with the SEBs. These are shown in Figure 4.1 and the estimated costs are set out in Table 4.1 below. The options provided a wide range of alternatives for consultation and were designed to stimulate the assessment of how the optimum balance between competing environmental, economic and other objectives might be struck.

Table 4.1 Costs of Route Alternatives

Alternative	Length km (mile)	Cost (£ million)
Red	5.5 (3.4)	£145
Blue	5.4 (3.4)	£60
Brown	5.3 (3.3)	£50
Orange	5.1 (3.2)	£50
Purple	5.9 (3.7)	£55
Pink	6.9 (4.3)	£85

4.2.6 All of the six route options shared the 1.7km (1.1 mile) Bexhill Connection which follows the route of an old railway through the built-up area to just beyond the town where it would link up with the proposed North East Bexhill Development. The options from this point to the junction with Queensway follow northern, central and southerly routes.

4.2.7 The northern routes skirted the Combe Haven SSSI. The Red Route Option ran in deep cuttings and tunnels to minimise its potential environmental impact which resulted in a very high scheme cost of £145m. The Blue and Brown

4.2.8 Route Options involved less engineering which reduced the scheme cost of the Blue Route Option to £60m. The scheme cost of the Brown Route Option reduced to £50m but at the environmental cost of directly crossing the SSSI. The northern routes had a greater potential than the other routes to disrupt the historic landscape pattern, although it could have been reduced through going into tunnel as on the Red Route Option, at a considerably higher capital cost. The Blue and Brown Route Options would be visually intrusive to the Combe Haven SSSI, although this could be mitigated to some extent. The northern routes, Red, Blue, or Brown, could have helped to define the northern edge to the proposed Pebsham Countryside Park.

4.2.9 The Orange (central) Route Option was the shortest but in doing so directly crossed the Combe Haven SSSI on a viaduct. The Purple Route Option followed the ridge to the south of the disused railway line and crossed Combe Haven on viaduct. The Orange and Purple Route Options were potentially visible on the Worsham Ridge from the AONB and they crossed an area of very high archaeological potential and national wildlife value. These options would also have compromised the development of the proposed Pebsham Countryside Park.

4.2.10 The longest route was the (southern) Pink Route Option which ran close to the built up area and was able to provide a direct access to the north Bexhill developments. However, it had the most adverse environmental impacts of all the routes: the longest crossing of the Combe Haven SSSI, crossing the Local Nature Reserve, affected more households and compromised the proposed Pebsham Countryside Park.

4.2.11 The six route options were taken to public consultation in February 2004 and allowed a period of six weeks for comments. Public awareness and reaction were promoted by the circulation of a four page newsletter and questionnaire circulated to some 65,000 households in Bexhill, Hastings and Crowhurst.

4.2.12 A mobile exhibition was also taken to seven different venues in Bexhill and Hastings and was attended by more than 4,000 people and 2,558 completed questionnaires were received by the County Council. The consultation exercise is discussed in detail in Chapter 1: Introduction of the ES.

4.2.13 A Green Route Option was suggested at consultation and added to the assessment, although not costed, because of its high environmental impact. This route ran closer to the existing Bexhill and Hastings built up areas, to minimise the incursion in to the countryside.

4.2.14 The key driver in route selection was minimising the potential environmental impact of the new route as required by the Secretary of State and the SEBs. The selection of the Preferred Route Option considered the results of the public consultation on the options developed, as well as consultation with the SEBs, and technical assessments of all the options against DfT WebTAG criteria.

4.2.15 Preliminary Appraisal Summary Tables (ASTs) were prepared for all options. Table 4.2 presents a summary of the AST appraisals prepared by ESCC including the preferences stated from the public consultation exercise and from the SEBs.

4.2.16 The appraisal used a 7 point scale to score each option against the Government's five objectives for transport. A positive impact against the particular objective is indicated by a tick (✓) with a range of score of +1 to +3 and a negative impact by a cross (X) with a range of score of -1 to -3. For the public consultation scoring, the options were scored by their ranking from -3 to +3.

Table 4.2 Summary of Appraisal of Road Alternatives

Criteria	Routes						
	Red	Blue	Brown	Orange	Purple	Pink	Green
DfT Objectives for Transport ¹							
Environment	X	X	XX	XX	XX	XXX	XXX
Safety	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓
Economy	Not appraised - high Scheme cost	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓
Accessibility	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓
Integration	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓
Scheme Cost	XXX	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	X	Not costed - high environmental impact
Public Consultation	✓	✓✓	0	✓✓✓	X	XX	XXX
SEB's	✓✓	✓✓✓	XX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX
Score Totals	6	16	8	7	2	-3	-3

Notes:

¹In A New Deal for Transport, the DfT has set out its five main criteria for transport. These may be couched in terms of objectives, as follows:

- environmental impact - to protect the built and natural environment;
- safety - to improve safety;
- economy - to support sustainable economic activity and get good value for money;
- accessibility - to improve access to facilities for those without a car and to reduce severance; and
- integration - to ensure that all decisions are taken in the context of the Government's integrated transport policy.

From WebTAG Unit 2.2

4.2.17 All of the routes that directly crossed the Combe Haven SSSI – Brown, Orange, Purple, Pink and Green - had been rejected by at least one of the SEBs. The Blue and Red Route Options were supported by the SEBs with the Blue Route Option the more popular. The Blue Route Option was also strongly supported by

the public, although the Orange Route Option was the most popular, for it was considered by many to be the Option that would most directly solve congestion problems on the A259. Routes closer to the existing settlements - Pink, Purple and Green Route Options - were generally not supported by the public.

4.2.18 The Red and Pink Route Options were the most costly schemes at £145 million and £85 million respectively. The other options were similar at some £50-£60 million each. The technical assessment identified the Blue Route Option to meet most closely with the Government's objectives for transport.

4.2.19 Based on this assessment and consultations with the public and SEBs, ESCC Cabinet on 8th June 2004 agreed a decision to develop the Blue Route Option as the Preferred Route Option for the Scheme, with some design and alignment modifications that had arisen during the public consultation and consultation with the SEBs.

4.3 Public Transport Alternatives

4.3.1 When the decision to reject proposals for the two bypasses was announced in July 2001 by the Secretary of State, he directed instead the further investigation of a range of measures to tackle transport issues in Hastings which drew on the recommendation of the *Access to Hastings Study* as follows:

- A frequent 'metro' train service between Bexhill and Ore, providing a turn up and go service, using existing infrastructure and new trains (where required);
- A new station at Glyne Gap on the metro line;
- Electrification and dualling of the rail track between Ashford and Hastings, enabling a fast service to be provided;
- More frequent train services between Wadhurst and Tonbridge; and,
- Strengthened Quality Bus Partnership between Bexhill and Hastings on the A259.

4.3.2 These schemes were also further examined in the subsequent SoCoMMS and HSDP which supported these recommendations as set out in Table 4.3 below. These studies additionally recommended the possibility of a new passenger rail station at Wilting Farm. However, the Secretary of State indicated that the capacity to deliver the additional significant investment recommended by SoCoMMS was limited. But he encouraged the SRA to examine the scope for delivering the Study's objectives as part of its planning objectives.

Table 4.3 Strategy Elements from Key Studies

Strategies	Study		
	Access to Hastings	SoCoMMS	HSDP
Highway Schemes	Hastings Western and Eastern Bypasses - subsequently rejected by the Secretary of State.	BHLR; consideration of a link to the A21 along Queensway. Consideration of improvements on the A21 north of Hastings.	Bexhill to Hastings Link Road
Public Transport - rail/metro	Bexhill to Ore metro at a minimum frequency of four trains per hour, consisting of existing Brighton trains plus a new shuttle service or an extension of the Ashford service; Glyne Gap station with all metros calling. Ashford to Hastings electrification and sufficient infrastructure to permit a fast service calling only at Rye to run in addition to the existing Passenger Service Requirement stopping service. The fast service should be linked through to Brighton to provide more direct journey opportunities.	New rail stations at Glyne Gap, West St Leonards, (and potentially at Wilting Farm) with a frequent rail service (five trains per hour) between Ore and Bexhill, going on to Eastbourne. Ashford to Hastings service going on to Southampton, serving all Hastings stations.	New stations at Glyne Gap and St Leonards Marina (and possibly Wilting Farm) with train frequencies of at least 3 per hour at these stations, and with significant other train service frequency enhancements packaged as the East Coastway. Improved rail journey times between Hastings and Ashford with dual tracking of the line between Appledore and Ashford.
Public Transport - bus	Strengthened Quality Bus Partnership between Bexhill and Hastings (A259), on The Ridge and on Battle Road.	Strengthened Quality Bus Partnerships and bus priority schemes	Improvements in local bus services incorporating the use of Quality Bus Corridors.

Bexhill to Ore Metro

4.3.3 The SRA were asked by the Secretary of State in 2001 to work with the local authorities to consider proposals for a new station at Glyne Gap and proposals for an Ore to Bexhill metro rail service. An economic appraisal of the case for Bexhill to Ore metro services was carried out commissioned by the then SRA. They reviewed the impact of two options, an extension of existing services to provide 4 trains per hour, and a dedicated metro service. However the study concluded that the services were expected to generate little additional passenger demand and that costs would greatly exceed benefits. The work did not fully include the impact of regeneration benefits,

but these would need to be very large for the services to deliver value for money.

London to Hastings Service (Tonbridge to Wadhurst)

4.3.4 SRA's view was that service enhancements between Hastings and Tunbridge Wells would be a better route to delivering an enhanced London-Hastings service. A study was commissioned which indicated that a business case existed for providing additional peak services on this route. One additional peak service was introduced in September 2002, funded by SEEDA for one year, and subsequently a modified version of this service has been incorporated into the permanent timetable.

Glyne Gap Station

4.3.5 A study by Steer Davies Gleave (SDG) in 2000 for ESCC (New stations in the Hastings Area) also examined the feasibility of two potential new rail stations in the Hastings area, which were located at Glyne Gap and West Marina. The study findings indicated that the only new station to be viable was Glyne Gap, and that the Metro style service in the Hastings area was feasible.

4.3.6 A new station at Glyne Gap is recognised as a project within Network Rail's Strategy but is not identified as a priority. In the local context, and without an immediate source of support funding for the scheme, the Task Force sees other local rail priorities including the Ashford-Hastings line and Ore station upgrading.

Ashford to Hastings Increased Capacity and Quality Service

4.3.7 The proposed electrification is not being taken forward because of poor value for money. However, the existing rolling stock was replaced by modern air-conditioned diesel stock in 2004. In December 2005, a through service from Ashford to Brighton was introduced. Patronage has increased, and the Task Force is encouraged that this could be a sign of potential growth. The Task Force with its partners commissioned SDG for further assessments on the line, and the study identified a series of improvements leading to partial dualling. The current position is that Network Rail is reviewing these recommendations and is in discussion with the Task Force partners to see if any of these recommendations can be taken forward.

Wilting Farm Station

4.3.8 Mott MacDonald was commissioned by ESCC in 2004 to determine the viability of constructing a new passenger station at Wilting Farm. The study recommended that the original proposed site is far from ideal for the construction of a new station for the following reasons:

- The track gradient and radius appear to exceed the maximum allowed by Railway Group Standards and may make acceptable platform stepping distances unachievable;

- The existing embankments require extensive works to allow construction of a station building, platforms, footbridges and ramps; and,
- The area designated for the car parks and station approach would require extensive site clearance, and drainage works.

4.3.9 An alternative site to the north of the existing proposal is being considered to determine overall viability and work may be commissioned by SEEDA to investigate options for a station at Wilting Farm in more detail.

Quality Bus Partnership on A259 Corridor

4.3.10 ESCC was asked in 2001 by the Secretary of State to come forward with proposals through the LTP for improving bus services in Hastings to tackle regeneration. A Quality Bus Partnership has been formed along the A259 Corridor and the bus priority complementary measures proposed with the Scheme would assist in improving bus running along this corridor.

Public Transport Summary

4.3.11 Improved rail services are seen as essential elements of the County Council's integrated transport policy, and as an essential element of the total package required to achieve the economic revitalisation of the Bexhill and Hastings area. A number of the schemes mooted have already been implemented or are being pursued through the County's LTP.

4.3.12 However, this is not seen as an alternative, given the diverse and dispersed nature of transport demands in the area and the need to open up and provide local and sub-regional access to the new development areas on the urban fringes.