

Harrogate Area Committee
Harrogate Relief Road Member Briefing Note
28.09.2016

Background

In the 1990's development work was carried out investigating the options for a relief road. Several options were tested with a Western and Northern alignment, being adopted as preferred routes together with a Killinghall Bypass. The preferred route of the Western Bypass was subsequently revoked though the Northern alignment is still retained.

Since then significant traffic growth has taken place, with Harrogate and Knaresborough town centres both now suffering from significant traffic congestion, causing delays and unreliable journey times. Many of the key routes throughout both towns are either close to or at capacity especially in the peak hours.

The County Council recognises the traffic congestion issues in Harrogate and Knaresborough, both in terms of its impact on traffic with an origin or destination within the towns, but also on longer distance through traffic, particularly on the key A59 east west corridor. The County Council's Strategic Transport Prospectus identifies Harrogate Relief Road as a strategic priority. (<http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/article/32100/Strategic-transport-prospectus-2015>)

It also recognises that in order to address congestion levels, a relief road on its own is not the solution. Alongside a relief road, a package of complimentary sustainable transport measures is also required. This will likely include improving passenger transport facilities, providing improved cycling and pedestrian links and exploring opportunities for park & ride.

What are we doing?

The County Council is undertaking a review of the need for and alignment of a relief road. This will consider a number of options for a Harrogate and Knaresborough Relief Road including the currently adopted preferred route of a Harrogate Northern Relief Road and Killinghall Bypass. The review will also consider the need for and viability of, complementary sustainable transport measures in Harrogate and Knaresborough and its wider urban area.

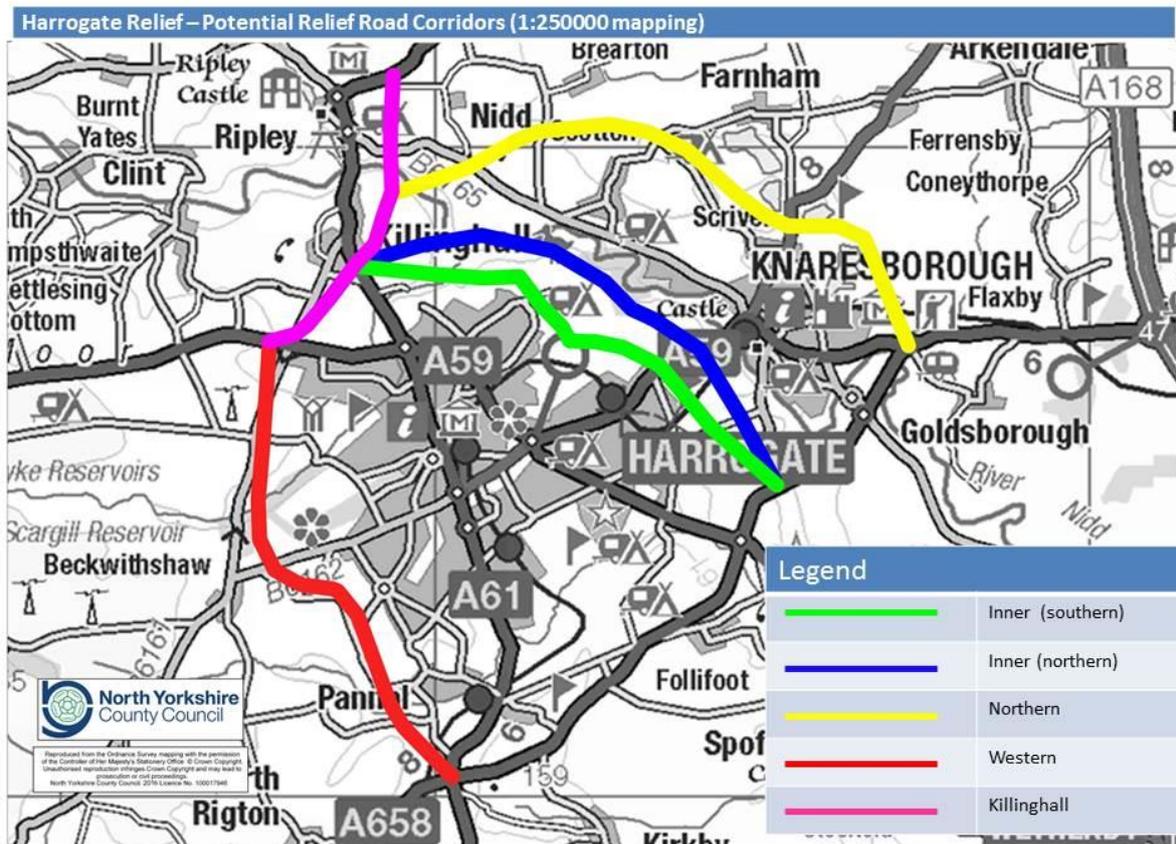
Harrogate Relief Road Steering Group

A Member led relief road steering group has been established. The purpose of the Harrogate Relief Roads Steering Group (HRR SG) is to provide guidance to officers of the County Council throughout the development process. Members of the steering group are County Councillors, Don Mackenzie and Michael Harrison and Borough Councillor Rebecca Burnett.

What relief road options are we looking at?

Due to the significant traffic growth since the 1990s when the Northern alignment was adopted as a preferred relief road option, and the growth of Harrogate and Knaresborough, the County Council has taken the decision as a starting point to look at all historic relief road options again. The indicative corridors that are being investigated can be found in the plan below (A larger separate pdf version of this plan is also supplied for your information).

It should be noted that the alignments shown in the following plan are only indicative at this stage, and illustrate potential corridors to be investigated further. All options being considered include a Killinghall Bypass.



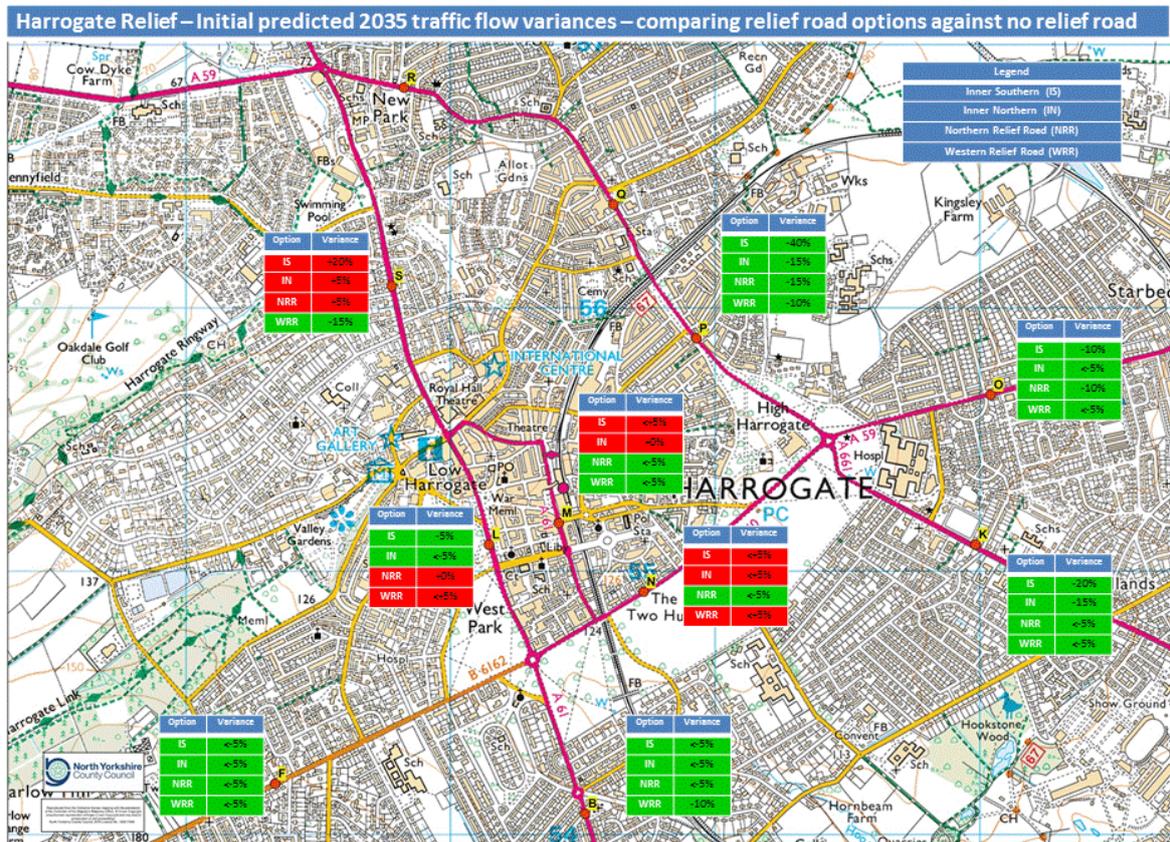
What work has been carried out so far?

The County Council working in partnership with Harrogate Borough Council has commissioned a traffic model for Harrogate, Knaresborough and Ripon. This is being used jointly by both authorities to test local plan development options and potential relief road corridors.

Initial testing has been carried out assessing 2035 traffic flows both with and without each potential corridor. At present they have been tested against a committed development scenario. This is effectively any developments that already have planning consent combined with an assumed background traffic growth over the next 20 years.

These initial results have shown that each of the relief road options will help to reduce traffic flows in Harrogate and Knaresborough. The impact varies between options, with the Inner Relief Road options providing the highest benefit, with, for example, a predicted reduction of flows between 20 and 40% on Skipton Road.

Both the Northern and Western alignments provide reduced benefits to the town centre networks, in comparison to the Inner options. However the western provides a significant benefit to both Ripon Road and Leeds Road. The following plan provides some outline results from the first phase of testing- showing some of the variations in traffic flow between leaving the network as it currently is, against each potential relief road option. (A larger separate pdf version of this plan is also supplied for your information).



What are the next steps?

In order to be able to seek Government funding for a relief road the County Council must follow an established Government process for the identification and assessment of major transport schemes.

The next phase of this process will involve testing the potential relief road options with predicted traffic increase from the Borough Councils Local Plan development options.

Once this phase of testing has been completed, we will begin to narrow down the list potential relief road corridor options, to identify which should be taken forward for more detailed review and appraisal. This will involve further outline design, feasibility and traffic modelling work as well as the consideration of planning and environmental constraints and widespread formal public consultation. The completion of this phase of work will help to identify if the existing alignment of the preferred route should be retained or if an alternative relief road corridor should be taken forward to preferred route status.

This is a complex and time consuming process. For example the assessment of the environmental impacts must be undertaken across all seasons during the year to identify the presence of different flora and fauna. Inevitably therefore the process to determine a preferred route will take approximately 18 months.

The County Council Executive, in consultation with the Steering Group and County Committee for the Harrogate Area will make the final decision on which, if any, relief road option should be adopted as a preferred route.

Assuming a preferred route is agreed, the County Council will commence work on developing an Outline Business Case for the relief road. Completion of the outline business case will mean that we are in a position to bid for funding from central government for the relief road.

Officers are currently developing a more detailed programme to identify key tasks and timeframes for this work.

The County Council, through the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership, has already bid for major schemes development funding from the Department of Transport to fund the preparation of an outline business case. We anticipate a decision on whether we have been successful to be announced by the end of 2016.

Where will further information be available?

A further update, including an indicative work programme, will be provided to the Area Committee in November 2016. In addition a webpage will be set up on the County Council website, which will provide information to the public on the relief road options and on the progress development work. This will also provide information on any future public and stakeholder consultation activities.