

Let us have  
your views

Your chance to give us your thoughts  
and comments on proposals for the

Crediton

Link Road

A public exhibition is being held on  
**Friday 25th Sept 2009** (10am – 8pm)  
and **Saturday 26th Sept 2009** (10am – 4pm)  
At **Crediton Old Town Hall**  
(corner of High St and Searle St)

You have the opportunity to express your views by  
completing the attached **form**. Please visit the  
exhibition where staff from Devon County Council  
will be available to answer your questions. Your  
views will then be collated and presented to The  
Cabinet of Devon County Council.

# The Problem

Crediton was declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) by Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) in November 2004. Detailed analysis of the sources of pollutants indicates that traffic emissions, especially Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs), are a significant contributor to this problem; particularly in the High Street and Exeter Road. These pollutants are associated with health issues and MDDC has a statutory responsibility under Section 84(2) of the Environment Act 1995 to produce an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) following the designation of an AQMA. The Air Quality Action Plan has been developed by MDDC in partnership with Devon County Council to address these problem areas.

Exeter Road is characterised by a narrow carriageway and street “canyon” with properties and other street features very close to the kerbside. The result is frequent congestion, especially when large vehicles meet, combined with poor dispersion conditions for pollutants.

# The Solution

Due to the narrow carriageway and historic buildings there are no traffic management options along Exeter Road. As a result of the “Planning for Real” exercise in Crediton a few years ago, the concept of a link road emerged between Lords Meadow Estate and the A377. A link road proposal would offer a direct route into the Industrial Estate for HGVs and other traffic thereby alleviating Exeter Road.

While pollutants are produced by all vehicles, diesel engines produce more of a type known as PM10s (very small particle size) than petrol engines. These particles are also produced by other sources including vehicle brakes.

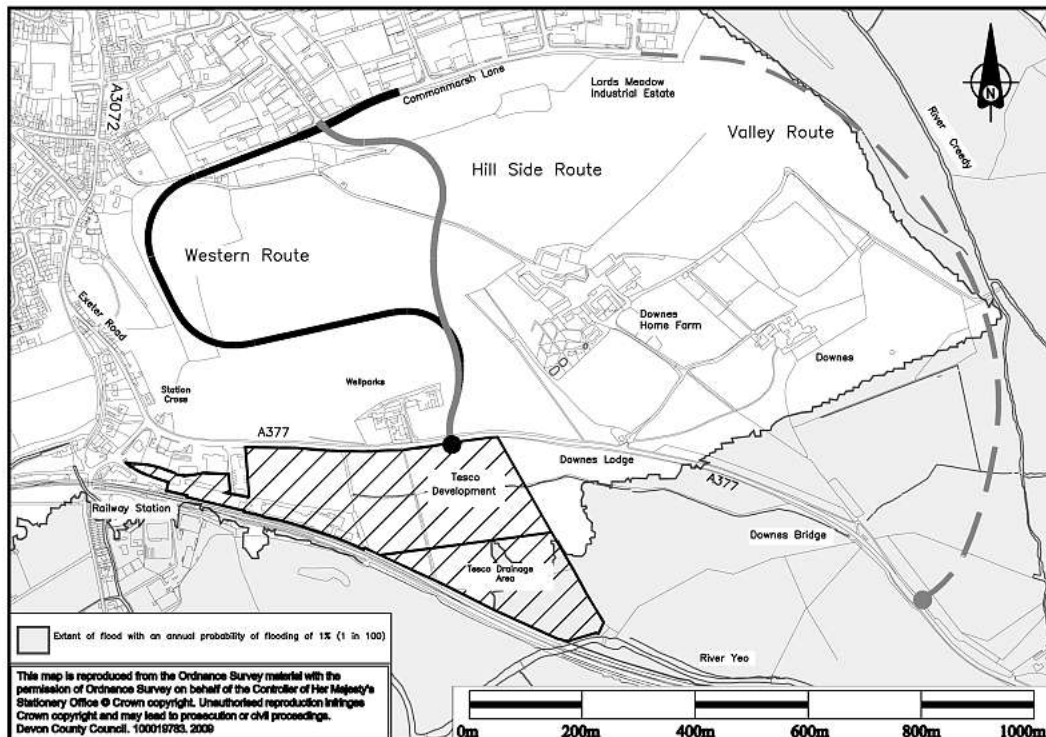
The Link Road proposal has been identified as Measure 1 of the AQAP. Of all the measures proposed this would give a “very high” level of improvement in air quality, but the plan indicates a “long” timescale for delivery with high associated cost.

Added benefits would be reduction in traffic noise along Exeter Road, Charlotte Street, and Mill Street; plus reduced congestion and reduced journey times. These benefits would be similar irrespective of which link road route is to be developed.

# Last Year's Exhibition

At last year's exhibition the options shown were the Valley Route and the Hillside Route. The opinions gathered from the 529 returned leaflets, emails, and letters from individuals and various interested parties gave a preference for the Hillside Route. However, there were several comments made about this route that led Devon County Council's Executive Committee, now called the Cabinet, to conclude that further investigation should be made into routes in the Downeshead Hill area.

This resulted in the development of the Western Route that was taken back to the Executive and became Devon County Council's preferred route.



# The Western Route

**Estimated Cost £6 Million**

This route was developed following comments made at the 2008 exhibition. Although it is longer than the Hillside Route, the alignment allows for excavated material to be used for visual and noise banks that would be landscaped and planted. This would reduce the expense of exporting materials off of the site. Although there are two lengths of 1 in 10 gradients these total less than half the lengths of the Hillside option. The junction with the industrial estate has been altered so that the gradient gently rises along Commonmarsh Lane rather than an instant 1 in 10 rise as with the Hillside Route. This route reduces the overall impact on Downes Estate and the northern escarpment of the hill. It does, however, affect allotments and these will need to be relocated.

# The Hillside Route

**Estimated Cost £7.5 Million**

This route to the east of the peak of Downeshead Hill has raised objections from several quarters. The hauliers on Lords Meadow Industrial Estate were concerned about the long length of a 1 in 10 gradient rising from the A377 and the same gradient rising from the junction with Marsh Lane and Commonmarsh Lane. The Downes Estate and English Heritage were concerned about the impact that this route would have on the setting of Downes House and the severance to the estate. It has been necessary to include a bridge to maintain access to a telephone mast, to maintain continuity of Downeshead Lane and alleviate the severance of farmland.

# The Valley Route

**Estimated Cost £10 Million**

This route was not taken further as responses at the last exhibition did not come out in its favour. The Environment Agency and English Heritage are both statutory consultees. The Environment Agency has stated that they would object to a valley option as presented at the last exhibition, while English Heritage would object to any route in the valley. There would be major ecological problems with loss of habitats and disturbance of protected species. Constructing a road in the valley with the inherent soil conditions would be a major risk and the cost estimated for construction far outweighs the benefits.

# Frequently Asked Questions

**1 Q The Tesco development is in the flood plain so why can't the Link Road be built in the flood plain?**

A The area developed by Tesco is not in the flood plain. The only part of their land in the flood plain is the area set aside for natural drainage which will remain grassed.

**2 Q Why aren't you developing the Valley Route?**

A There are 6 main reasons;

- i) The cost of the scheme, £10 million, outweighs the benefits.
- ii) There are many risks involved with building in a valley with the associated soil conditions.
- iii) The current design for the Valley route was predominantly in the flood plain and allows for the road to flood at times of exceptional storms. While the County Council took the view that periodic flooding of the road would be acceptable this is contrary to Planning Policy which the EA enforce on behalf of central government. To overcome their objection it would be necessary to move the junction with the A377 further east and out of the flood plain. An estimate for a route such as this would be in the region £20 million.
- iv) English Heritage has also stated that it would object due to the impact on the setting of Downes House.
- v) The responses given at the 2008 exhibition came out in favour of the Hillside Route (60% of respondents).
- vi) Adverse ecological and environmental implications include potential habitat loss along the river corridor and disturbance to protected species.

**3 Q Why do you have to take notice of what the Environment Agency says?**

A The Environment Agency is responsible to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. It has responsibility for protecting communities from the risk of flooding and managing water resources. Its principal aims are to protect and improve the environment, and to promote sustainable development. The advice from the Environmental Agency is in accordance with government policy and guidance. It plays a central role in delivering the environmental priorities of central government and are a statutory consultee as part of the planning process.

- 4 Q Why do you have to take notice of what English Heritage says?**  
A English Heritage is the Government's lead advisory body on the historic environment and central to that role is the provision of advice to local planning authorities and government departments on development proposals affecting certain types of historic sites. It advises on proposals with the potential for major change or damage to nationally important heritage assets such as grade I or II\* listed buildings. Advice from English Heritage is underpinned by government policy and guidance and it is also a statutory consultee.
- 5 Q Why haven't you continued to work on the Hillside Route when the results for the last exhibition came out in favour of it instead of coming up with yet another option?**  
A Various comments made by individuals and groups of people during the consultation period showed that there was room for improvement. Particularly with regards to the very steep gradient which could be problematic for HGVs and large vehicles, which are the main types of traffic we want to take away from the town centre. These comments were taken to the Executive whose conclusion was that we should investigate routes to the west of the hill summit. As we are spending Council tax payers money on this scheme, we wanted to make sure that the route solved most of the problems and would be economical, provide good value for money and would still give a sound engineering solution.
- 6 Q What are the expected costs of the Valley, Hillside and Western Routes?**  
A The current estimates for these routes if construction starts in 2011 are:  
Valley Route - £10 million  
Hillside Route - £7.5 million  
Western Route - £6 million
- 7 Q The Western Route is much longer than the Hillside Route so how can it be cheaper?**  
A The Hillside Route involves cutting through the crest of the hill whereas the Western Routes just cuts into the side of the hill. Also, the Western Route saves £1.5 million by using the excavated material to make earth banks that would form a visual and noise barrier.
- 8 Q How close does the Western Route come to the Exeter Road houses and other properties?**  
A The nearest Exeter Road property, number 22, is 119 metres away from the edge of the proposed carriageway whereas the front of this property is immediately adjacent to the highway in Exeter Road. Some properties which lie alongside Exeter Road will be over 140m from the proposed Western Route. The Pound, Mill Street, is 59 metres away from the edge of the proposed carriageway and is 40 metres away from Mill Street. The distance from the centre of Buller Square to the Western Route is 93 metres whereas Mill Street is 38 metres away from the same point. Earth banks, planting and environmental barriers will be placed between these areas and the Western Route option.

- 9 Q Will the Western Route increase vehicular pollution?**  
A No. None of the options that have been looked at would increase pollution. All of the routes take existing traffic away from the populated residential area, thereby minimising public exposure to any vehicle emissions.
- 10 Q What are you doing to reduce the visual intrusion, the noise and pollution on the built up areas from the Western Route?**  
A Due to the vertical alignment of this route we will have a lot of material that can be used to build earth banks such that the road, or any vehicle on it, will not be seen from Exeter Road. This bank will be seeded with a grass mix rich in species to promote wildlife and planted with shrubs and trees. These screening features will also deflect some of the noise.  
If this route is built it will reduce the number of vehicles, particularly heavy goods vehicles, using Exeter Road which will reduce the vehicle pollution from HGVs. A reduction in the number of HGVs using Exeter Road will, again, reduce vehicle emissions and improve air quality in this area.  
The new road will be further away from properties than the existing route along Exeter Road which is enclosed by high vertical walls, which trap the pollutants. In the new scheme emissions would disperse far more quickly.
- 11 Q What will you do to mitigate the loss of some of the old orchard?**  
A If this scheme goes ahead approximately half of the trees, 23, in the orchard area to the east of Fairpark would be lost. We would look for opportunities to replace these and plant additional fruit trees in the vicinity. It is possible that grafts could be taken from the existing trees to ensure the continuity of the mix of species. Hedgerows and other trees and shrubs will also be planted.
- 12 Q There is a badger sett near the old orchard. What will you do about this?**  
A Our environmental consultants are aware of this and further studies are being undertaken. As with all new developments in the vicinity of a badger sett we shall employ experts to advise and carry out any relocation required.
- 13 Q Are your traffic figures up to date?**  
A A permanent traffic counter is located on the A377 to the west of Crediton which provides continuous, up-to-date figures on traffic flows and patterns on the A377. This counter has been monitoring traffic data since 2003. Additional traffic count data was also collected in Crediton in 2008. All of this data has been used in the traffic model to ensure that it is up-to-date and representative of the current situation.
- 14 Q What effect has the new development to the west of Crediton had on the traffic figures?**  
A The traffic counter mentioned in Question 13 has shown that traffic flows on the A377 to the west of Crediton have not increased since 2003. However, further future development and the Tesco site are predicted to increase traffic flows on the A377 to the east of Crediton.

- 15 Q Will the Western Route put more traffic onto the routes to the north east of CREDITON than the Hillside or the Valley Route?**
- A No. The Western, Hillside and Valley Routes all start with a junction on the A377 and end on Common Marsh Lane so they would all use the same access road through the estate to the north east of CREDITON. None of the Link Road options are predicted to significantly increase traffic flows on the local residential roads within CREDITON.
- 16 Q What will happen in a couple of years time when the whole of the Tesco site is up and running and the traffic will have risen in Exeter Road again?**
- A If the link road is not built, traffic flows on the A377 to the east of CREDITON are predicted to increase by 58% by 2016, due to further development in CREDITON and the construction of Tesco. The proposed link road would remove traffic from the A377 by providing a direct route in to the Industrial Estate; this would reduce traffic flows by 12%, and HGV flows by 32%.
- 17 Q Will residents of Exeter Road notice a drop in noise level or will the new road add to the noise?**
- A The reductions in traffic on Exeter Road, as detailed in the answer above, would give a noticeable drop in noise levels for the residents. This is because of the distance to the new road and the adjacent earth bank
- 18 Q If a link road goes ahead when will it be built and how long do you expect it to take to construct once on site?**
- A Our current plan is to start construction in 2011 and expect it to take 12 months to complete. However, this will all depend on funding.
- 19 Q What is the speed limit of the proposed Western Route and will the design allow for overtaking slower lorries on the steep gradients?**
- A The speed limit will be 30 mph. It will not be widened to allow overtaking due to the speed limit but will have specialist lane markings that will allow careful overtaking of very slow vehicles.
- 20 Q What would you do to mitigate the effect of losing a length of Downeshead Lane with the Western Route?**
- A A new length of footway will be constructed so that pedestrians can cross the proposed road and go across the cutting slope at an easy gradient which will connect back into the old lane.
- 21 Q I believe that the Western Route will cut across some existing allotments. What will you do for those who lose their patch at a time when there are long waiting lists for these sites?**
- A The Downes Estate, who own the land that the allotments are on, have indicated that they will allocate another plot for this use. We are legally obliged to replace any allotments lost to the scheme.

**22 Q What are you going to do about residential properties affected by the new route?**

A The land that would be required for any of the routes does not infringe upon any of the land belonging to residential properties.

**23 Q Why is the listed status of Downes House being given more weight than the listed status of properties in Buller Square and Exeter Road?**

A The listing of Downes House includes the surroundings and backdrop which were designed to set the house in a tranquil landscape which is on the Local Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. The Valley Route would have an adverse impact upon the setting of the house and spoil some of the features that are characteristic of the Estate. The Hillside route would have less impact but would also encroach into the setting of the house. The other properties are already in an urban setting and the proposal does not actually cut into any gardens belonging to them.

**24 Q Why are DCC investing in new roads when they should be improving public transport?**

A The Tesco Planning agreement involved some funding which amounted to £60,000 a year for 5 years. This will fund an additional bus service for the town, calling at Tesco and the railway station.

DCC is looking at improving public transport generally but this would not solve the specific problem in Exeter Road, where a significant amount of traffic is associated with commercial activities.

MDDC has a statutory responsibility under the Environment Act 1995 to produce an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) following the designation of an AQMA. The Air Quality Action Plan has been developed by MDDC in partnership with Devon County council to address these problem areas. The Link Road proposal has been identified as Measure 1 of the AQAP. Of all the measures proposed this would give a “very high” level of improvement in air quality, but the plan indicates a “long” timescale for delivery with high associated cost.

**25 Q How can your engineers design a road in a town when they don't even live here?**

A As you will appreciate Devon County Council staff can be asked to work anywhere in the county and are often working on several schemes at the same time. It would be impossible for us to be able to live near to every scheme that we are involved in.

However, our role is to gather information, design alignments, consider construction aspects and provide cost estimates for options of proposed highway schemes. The information and advice that we gather includes geotechnical, environmental, traffic, noise, emissions, ecological, visual and archaeological. We consult, correspond and meet with other government bodies and statutory organisations such as district, town and parish councils, and the Environment Agency and, should the need arise, organisations such as English Heritage and Natural England.

We also work with local groups and over the years we have met with land owners and representatives of the Crediton Traffic Action Group. Public consultations such as the one carried out in 2008 and this one, September 2009, is another way in which we gather valuable local information.

**26 Q Has the Council looked at improving the roads to the north of Crediton, i.e. Higher Road and Stonewall Lane to Exhibition Road?**

A Yes, we have carried out a feasibility study to assess improvements to these roads. The traffic figures for these roads would have to increase substantially before we considered at making any improvements.

**27 Q Where will all of the rain water go that falls onto the proposed road?**

A We are obliged to use a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDs). This takes the water via pipes and open ditches to a system of shallow lagoons which will be planted. In the case of heavy storms these will delay the rain water entering the streams and rivers. The special planting will also reduce the flow and filter pollutants from the water.

**28 Q How much money has been passed between any of the following for this scheme; Tesco, Devon County Council, Downes Estate and Mid Devon District Council?**

A Contrary to rumour no monies have been exchanged. However, in the event of a link road being built, the County Council have negotiated, through a Section 106 agreement, a contribution of between £1.2 and £2 million from Tesco. This will be put towards the cost of the construction of the road. However, if the road has not been started within 10 years then the obligation for Tesco to pay any part of the Link Road contribution will lapse, and the scheme will then be undeliverable.

**29 Q Why was last year's exhibition loaded to the Hillside Route?**

A The County Council does not 'load' information. With some schemes the margin between options is quite small, whilst with others, such as this scheme, the margin was large. It was quite clear that the Hillside Option for a link road could be comparatively straightforward to deliver, subject to funding being available, and therefore it was the Council's preferred route. At this year's exhibition you will see the comparison between the Hillside and Western Routes.

**30 Q Do you take any notice of what is said in responses to exhibitions?**

A Yes, we do. For the last exhibition we sent out 3,600 invitation leaflets that also had a pre-paid postage reply form. 300 people attended the Exhibition and 529 returned the leaflets, by post or at the exhibition, with 9 others sending letters or emails. 60% of these respondents expressed a preference for the Hillside Route. The results from the consultation were reported to the County Council's Executive committee in November 2008 which resulted in them requesting that we further investigate routes in the Downeshead Hill area.

# The exhibition

**The exhibition on the 25th and 26th September 2009** will give you much more information about each of the routes and what DCC's and other groups views are on each of them. There will also be information regarding the history of the route options, traffic, noise, pollution, environmental impact, ecology and archaeology.

We encourage you to visit the exhibition where there will be larger scale plans, more detailed information and a 3D visual presentation before you fill in your reply. The display text plans and diagrams will be available on the DCC web page at **[www.devon.gov.uk/creditonlinkroad](http://www.devon.gov.uk/creditonlinkroad)** from the 25th September. You can fill in your reply form and post it at the exhibition but if you are unable to attend, please send in your postage paid form before 5th October 2009.

Alternatively you can email us at: **[creditonlinkroad-mailbox@devon.gov.uk](mailto:creditonlinkroad-mailbox@devon.gov.uk)** or you can write to us at: **Major Schemes – Crediton, Matford Offices, County Hall, Exeter EX2 4QW**

# Reply form

Please give your comments on the **Western** and **Hillside** Routes below.

Your name and address (this is optional). PLEASE PRINT

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

