Bexhill to Hastings Link Road
Summary Findings Focus groups July 2011

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1.1 Introduction
Hopkins Van Mil was commissioned to run six focus groups on 11 July 2011 to consult local residents and members of the business community in Bexhill and Hastings about their views on regeneration and the role of transport. The focus groups took place at the Cooden Beach Hotel in Cooden Beach (12.30 – 3 pm) and the University of Brighton in Hastings (6-8.30 pm). Invitations were sent to members of East Sussex County Council’s established Residents Panel and to locally affected Councils and residents associations. Local business organisations were also invited and via those organisations the invite was extended to individual local businesses. The events were attended by 36 participants in Cooden Beach and 20 in Hastings. The programme is provided at Appendix 1. Some of the invitees who couldn’t make it to the meetings sent their comments via email. These are included at Appendix 6.

1.2 Main findings
The focus group discussion focussed on challenges facing residents and businesses in Bexhill and Hastings, main solutions to the challenges and views on the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road.

Key challenges identified are:
- Regeneration
- Attracting new business
- Education and employment
- Traffic and transport.

The main solutions to these challenges were seen to be as follows:
- Improved road and transport structure
- Attracting new business to create employment
- Raising educational levels local population

5 out of the 6 groups were in favour of the Link Road. Of these, 2 were of the view that it had already been delayed too long and should proceed immediately. The other 3 groups in favour said that the Link Road was an important part of the regeneration plan, but was only part of the solution. They were concerned that financial restrictions might reduce its effectiveness and, in particular, that there should be improvements to the network at each end of the Link Road. The sixth group did not believe that the Link Road would be effective in addressing the problems identified.

1.3 Next steps & recommendations
HVM recommends that ESCC keeps involving the community as the process continues. We support ESCC’s decision to maintain the website as the main source of up-to-date information and give email updates when the submission to DfT has been made in September and when the results are known in December. After that it would be helpful for business and resident communities to meet again to agree next steps. It would be useful for future consultation to keep business and community discussions separate ensuring that those with a similar understanding of the issues have an opportunity to contribute equally.

1.4 Thanks
The report concludes by thanking the East Sussex Council Team for excellent organisation of the events and all participants for their positive contribution.
2. Introduction

2.1 Purpose of focus groups
The purpose of the focus groups was:
- To update the consultation undertaken in 2004 to support the Best and Final Bid for the Link Road; this is due for submission in September 2011 at the request of the Department for Transport.
- To understand to what extent people recognise the issues around regeneration for Bexhill and Hastings.
- To clarify the extent to which there is understanding around transport as a regeneration solution.

2.2 Focus group programme (see Appendix 1)
Andy Robertson, Assistant Director – Policy, Economy, Transport & Environment, East Sussex County Council, made a short presentation about the history of regeneration in the area and the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road. Lead facilitator Henrietta Hopkins (HH) from Hopkins Van Mil: Creating Connections introduced the facilitation team, Anita van Mil (AvM) and Hally Ingram (HI), and explained the ground rules for participation in a constructive dialogue (see Appendix 3: Discussion guidelines). The participants joined their small groups for intensive discussions around:
- Current and future challenges in the Bexhill and Hastings area
- Main solutions to these challenges
- The role of transport
- Views on the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road.
Each group produced a summary sheet which was displayed for comments in the plenary hall at the end of the session.

Andy Robertson closed the session summing up next steps (see Section 4).

2.3 Focus group evaluation (see Appendix 6)
100% of participants both in Cooden Beach and Hastings said they had enough opportunity to air their views. Despite the constraints of a 1.5 hour timeslot the following comments were made:

‘Good discussion session’

‘It was good to relay my views’

‘Useful opportunity to reiterate the urgency’

‘Thank you for inviting me to comment and participate in the debate’

96.2% of the participants in Cooden Beach and 88.2% of the participants in Hastings felt their small group facilitator was good or excellent.

3. Focus group findings

The participants were split into three facilitated discussion groups to discuss their views on regeneration in Bexhill and Hastings and their views on the Link Road. The full transcripts of each of the small group discussions including transcripts of ‘Any other thoughts’ cards, can be found in Appendix 4. The following is a brief summary of the main findings of the focus groups drawing on the discussions and comments made through the evaluation forms (see Appendix 6).
3.1 Challenges facing residents and businesses in Bexhill and Hastings
Most focus groups touched on the following challenges: regeneration; attracting new business; education and employment; traffic and transport.

3.1.1 Regeneration
One of focus groups produced a flow chart summarising the challenges in Bexhill and Hastings:

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Intolerable congestion ↓
Inhibiting job creation and business expansion ↓
Stifling the benefits of regeneration
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All participants seemed convinced that continued regeneration of the Bexhill and Hastings area is of great importance in dealing with issues such as deprivation, crime, and the need to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of residents. Doing nothing, said one group, would lead to a ‘Have not society’. Some raised concerns about the sustainability of new developments, especially with regards to education, infrastructure and carbon footprint. Others asked for clarity about the wider vision for the area.

3.1.1 Education and employment
Unemployment and the lack of aspiration of young people was a recurring theme throughout the focus groups. The area is in need of improved employment opportunities and inspirational role models for young people. There is a role for schools and Further Education in the development of employability skills and career coaching. To retain a socio-demographic balance,

‘We need jobs to keep young people and young families in the area’,

said one participant.

3.1.2 Attracting new businesses
To attract new businesses many participants said the area needs to develop a right package of benefits. They considered that at the moment there is a lack of investment, which is hindering business and economic growth. Poor regional accessibility to and from the area plays a major role.

3.1.3 Traffic congestions and poor public transport
Traffic congestion was a key issue for all groups as there are many related issues, e.g. air quality, pollution, accidents, long commuting time, lack of emergency access, poor access to schools and colleges. One participant said:

‘It is not acceptable in business / personal terms to spend 50 minutes travelling just a few miles’

And someone else:

‘Taking the bus is not viable because of congestion’.

Most groups pointed out that Hastings is the only coastal town where the South Coast Trunk Road runs along its seafront, with one group saying that this is:

‘A key reason for its comparative disadvantage’.
A representative from Hastings Rother Disability Forum said in an email:

‘I strongly believe we need the link road for both speed of access to the local hospital in Hastings and for job creation and housing’.

Someone else said:

Build more roads, there is no inch of motor way in Sussex, no dual carriageways’.

All groups mentioned poor public transport provision, including poor rail connections to and from London and an inefficient bus service as a consequence of congestion on A259.

3.2 Main solutions to challenges
One group stressed that attracting investment to the Bexhill/ Hastings area is hindered by the general image of the South East being an affluent region. They said that there is a role for East Sussex County Council to advocate and lobby on behalf of the area.

3.2.1 Improved road and transport structure
All groups mentioned improved road and transport structures as a solution to the challenges faced by residents and businesses in the area.

‘We need infrastructure to support regeneration initiatives: the new wave’.

3.2.2 Attract new business to create employment
To attract new business and create new employment opportunities participants said that accessibility has to be improved and land needs to be released for development. One group summarised this as follows:

‘Different types of employment need to be created: service employment, tourist type jobs, and manufacturing jobs. BHLR is an opportunity as it is offering development options.’

At the same time participants said that there is an urgent need for better PR for the area, building on the strengths of Bexhill and Hastings, and celebrating local success.

3.2.3 Raising educational levels local population
To increase employability educational levels have to be raised. Future businesses will only employ people who have appropriate knowledge and skills according to many of the business representatives at the sessions.

‘Bring new businesses into area to help unemployment and education (apprenticeships)’.

3.3 Views on Bexhill to Hastings Link Road
The majority of participants in the focus groups held on 11 July 2011 saw the Link Road as a positive stepping stone. One group said loud and clearly:

‘We’ve got to do it now’.

They see the Link Road as part of preparations for the upturn that will follow the economic recession. They said:
‘The Link Road will help to ease the traffic situation. It has already been approved and would have started if it wasn’t for the cuts’.

The Link Road will open up areas for much needed development. One participant said:

‘With a Link Road we can have a business park: better jobs, more opportunities for youngsters to stay.’

Those with this view saw regeneration as the primary goal, not the road. People said:

‘Transport is a means to an end: we need to improve economy and wellbeing of area, which is the root problem. Transport plays a role in this’.

Some participants, however, voiced concerns about the lack of evidence for regeneration as a result of the Link Road.

‘We have not seen any evidence that this road is going to contribute to regeneration: what is the cost-benefit ratio?’

As the Link Road would relieve at least some of the congestion on the A259 one group said that it would:

‘Help ease potential health issues’.

Positive effects of the Link Road are for some participants that it would increase emergency access:

‘Access to and from the two locations of the hospital is crucial – link road would be a godsend’.

Some see the Link Road as:

‘A contribution to the solution, not the full answer’.

And for many participants the Link Road is a

‘Second best solution’,

with the bypass as best solution. One group said:

‘Build it as soon as possible and then get on with bypass’.

Others emphasised that road improvement has to go hand-in-hand with public transport improvements:

‘Focusing on the car is denying a service to those who are not car users. They are dependent on public transport’.

Whereas a small minority wondered:

‘Why a new road? If you move cars, you move congestions, car parks etc. Wouldn’t it be better to have a metro/ tram type system?’

Others said:
‘The Link road will result in a new station at Wilting Farm; this would support commuting to London as on Victoria branch, and have other knock on benefits’.

Should the Bexhill Link Road be built the groups would like East Sussex Council to consider how to avoid the creation of new bottle necks at the start and end of the Link Road at Queensway, The Ridge and Baldstow junction. They expressed the view that both ends have to be properly integrated with the existing road system. The groups also made a plea for incorporation of Pebsham Countryside park plans in the Link Road proposals.

4. Next steps & recommendations

4.1 Next steps
Andy Robertson explained in closing the events that East Sussex County Council will read the transcripts of the focus group discussion with interest and will make sure views are used to inform the Best and Final Bid which will be submitted to the Department for Transport on 9 September 2011.

The participants will receive a summary of the findings and the full transcripts of the focus groups will be made available.

Around 85% of the participants expressed through the evaluation that they were clear or very clear about East Sussex Council’s next steps. Although someone said:

‘Not sure if our input will impact on the proposal - DFT’s reasoning for requesting this event?’

And someone else mentioned to be:

‘Worried that views will be ignored’.

Other comments were made such as:

‘ESCC must compose a very convincing submission. The issues are clear.’

‘Make sure you make a good case’.

4.1 HVM recommendations
Given the time constraints East Sussex County Council managed to engage Bexhill/Hastings residents and businesses effectively with the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road proposal. HVM recommends that ESCC keeps involving the community as the process continues.

We support ESCC’s decision to maintain the website as the main source of up-to-date information and give email updates to those that participated in the focus groups as the process evolves. This includes alerting people when the submission to DfT has been made in September and when the results are known in December.

After that it would be helpful for business and resident communities to meet again to agree next steps, whatever DfT’s funding decision.

It would be useful for future consultation to keep business and community discussions separate ensuring that those with a similar understanding of the issues have an opportunity to contribute equally.
5. Thank you

Hopkins Van Mil would like to thank all those who took part in the focus groups for their positive contributions. We also wish to thank Sarah Lade, Scheme Development Manager Transport Planning, for organising the event so smoothly from beginning to end. Participants made the following comments:

‘All well presented and punctual’

And:

‘A well run event’

It has been a pleasure to work with the team at East Sussex County Council, who have demonstrated that community consultation is not a tick box exercise but a genuine process to incorporate community views in the Best and Final Bid.

Hopkins Van Mil, 18 July 2011

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Appendix 1: Programme Focus group 11 July 2011

Venue: Cooden Beach Hotel (Cooden Beach)  
University Centre, University of Brighton (Hastings)
Arrivals: Cooden 12.30; Hastings 6 pm  
Meeting: Cooden 1-3 pm; Hastings 6.30 – 8.30 pm

1. Introduction by East Sussex County Council

2. Objectives, outputs and agenda of the workshop by Hopkins Van Mil

3. Small group sessions  
  o Current and future challenges facing residents and businesses in Bexhill and Hastings  
  o Possible solutions to these challenges  
  o Role of transport in this context  
  o Views on the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road

4. Groups put up display sheets  
  o Participants to look round the display sheets and feedback comments

5. Summary and next steps
Bexhill to Hastings Link Road Consultation

Monday 11th July 2011
University Centre, Hastings

Background Information

Background to Bexhill to Hastings Link Road

Since 2001, the Hastings and Bexhill Task Force has been focused on improving the economy in Hastings and surrounding areas, which had been in decline for many years.

Made up of the South East England Development Agency, local authorities and other organisations, a key aim of the task force was improved transport between Bexhill and Hastings. Following public consultation, a route for a new road was selected.

We believe the link road will support regeneration and benefit residents and businesses by opening up access to land for new housing and business developments and bringing more employment opportunities.

Update July 2011

Following the completion of the Public Inquiry into objections to the Compulsory Purchase Orders in November 2009, the County Council submitted its case in March 2010 for final approval of funding from the Department for Transport (DfT). However, following the General Election in May 2010, DfT announced that there would be new arrangements for the funding of major transport schemes. As a result, the original programme of carrying out environmental and archaeological preparation works in 2010, starting construction in 2011 and completion of the Link Road by the end of 2012 was put on hold.

Under these new arrangements, the County Council submitted an expression of interest to DfT in January this year. This can be found on the ESCC and DfT websites. A Best and Final Bid has to be submitted to DfT by 9 September this year, with decisions by Ministers on funding expected before Christmas. The BHLR is one of 45 schemes seeking funding totalling £900m at the Expression of Interest stage from an available pot of £650m. Against this background, DfT has made it clear that the 45 schemes are in competition with each other for the available funding and scheme promoters should therefore seek to reduce costs and/or secure alternative funding to reduce the contribution being sought from central government.

As part of our final bid to DfT we are required to provide an up-to-date picture of the views of local residents, businesses and other organisations on the Link Road proposals. At the focus group session on Monday 11th July you will have the opportunity to put forward your views on the effectiveness of the BHLR proposal in addressing the economic, social and transport challenges facing the Bexhill and Hastings area.
Appendix 3: Discussion Guidelines

The purpose of the focus group is for East Sussex County Council to get a better understanding of the views of local residents and the business community on regeneration in Bexhill and Hastings and the role of transport.

The County Council wants to make sure that everyone’s views have been taken into account in support of a ‘Best and Final’ funding bid for submission in September 2011 at the request of the Department for Transport. To make this possible we would ask everyone to respect a few ground rules.

Please:
- Note that remarks will not be attributable to individuals afterwards. At the end of the engagement process we will have a record of all the views expressed but not who said what unless a participant explicitly requests to be named. This is important to ensure that everyone feels they can speak freely and openly.
- Be positive in your comments (even if you disagree with someone) – constructive criticism is often much more effective in an open discussion than a bald disagreement.
- Understand that everyone’s input is equally valuable; facilitators will record everything that informs the discussion to hand.
- Allow everyone a fair and equal opportunity to speak and try not to interrupt. The facilitators will note that you are trying to make a comment and give you time as appropriate.
- Don’t take part in side conversations as it makes it harder for everyone to hear and take part.
- When we’re getting off-the point the facilitator will make this clear.
- Remember that the facilitator is there to help, to keep the workshop to time and to give everyone a chance to air their views, so do turn to anyone on the facilitation team for advice if you need more support to get your view across.

Enjoy the event and do make use of the ‘Any Thoughts...’ cards to write down any additional comments or questions you may have. These can be deposited in the ‘Any Thoughts...’ box which will be available at the venue, or posted back to the facilitation team (address below). Questions will be answered within 28 days of the focus group where appropriate.
Appendix 4: Flipchart transcripts

Afternoon session Cooden Beach

Group 1 (HH)
Discussions recorded by facilitator onto flip chart paper

Challenges facing residents and businesses in Bexhill/ Hastings area
(written on post it notes by participants)

Current challenges
- Economy
- Unemployment
- Transport – roads not suitable for purpose
- Housing requirements
- Shortage of land for building
- improving the job market in very difficult economic times
- Transport
- Jobs
- Ageing population
- Traffic getting heavier particularly lorries too big for current road
- Local public transport very poor
- Lack of infrastructure
- Blocked roads
- Severe traffic congestions at a time of poor / low economic activity!
- What will happen when the economy starts growing again
- Poor links from area to other town (road and rail)
- Very poor links between Hastings & Bexhill
- Housing requirements, shortage of land for building
- Bexhill regeneration stalled due to shortage of land for business development
- Combination of business help through organisation such as East Sussex Hub etc
- Situation geography (coastal)
- Transport in an out
- Lack of productivity business failing because shoppers actively avoid the area

Future challenges
- Too close to village
- SSSI / wildlife
- Noise/ light pollution
- Employment and investment: quality of staff
- Economic growth in area may overload road and rail link to wider area
- Moving bottle necks
- Empty buildings premises on current industrial estate making it difficult to attract new businesses
- Making the most of the newly regenerated area – e.g. Turner & Margate; Jerwood Gallery & Hastings; New Wave & Bexhill
- Having a vehicle to continue regeneration: projects for the future
- Attracting businesses
- Destination of Link Road: joining A21
- Whether traffic moves from A259
- Keeping young people and young families in the area with jobs, i.e. a social-demographic balance
- Producing a workforce - young people especially – who are educated to the high standard demanded by businesses knowledge and skills
- Choked up roads
• Inadequate health care/ hospitals etc
• Inadequate schools
• Higher population
• Villages will be changed into towns as they will get busier with traffic, noise etc
• People will still opt for the usual route when roads are busy turning the ‘rat run’ elsewhere
• With a Link Road can have business park: better jobs, more opportunities for youngsters to stay
• Increased economic activity because of proximity to Europe low
• Low education level of many particularly Hastings; this means more trained employees travelling into area
• UCH – expanding
• Without extra jobs local graduates will not be able to stay local

Discussion about current challenges

Congestion
• Not acceptable in business / personal terms to spend 50 minutes travelling just a few miles
• Put off by ambiance & delays
• People actively avoiding the area
• ‘I actually changed jobs to avoid the issue 16 years ago’
• Lorry blocking the lanes makes all of it work
• Bus services – road too congested
• No traffic management system – who is responsible? (Raven side Just Windows – is that?)
• Road seriously unsuitable for lorries using sat nav (tearing the hedges apart on each side, they can’t turn round and knock walls down)
• Congestion caused by school run – encouraging walking to school, but not possible in a very rural areas
• Is there a rhythm to the congestion?
• Consistent throughout the day & week-ends
• Rat runs through the village
• Air quality problem
• Noise, congestion, air quality all issues for people living near the A259
• Attracting business to the area very difficult, not taken seriously – lack of business premises – congestion (Locate East Sussex)

Jobs
• Link between Link Road and business park: I’m unconvinced. Such difficult times economically
• On the other had: Elder →30 jobs; Sage →200 jobs. If you have the right premises it attracts people
• If you can get the staff in and out
• Q: opening businesses anywhere near the coast
• Net based businesses – higher paid better quality
• Need investment in latest buildings
• Superfast Broadband
• Look at standard of retail as an indicator of regeneration: Hastings reasonable but Bexhill isn’t
• Vicious circle: poor area needs investment to turn that around
• Programme of regeneration – Brighton University knowledge transfer scheme using students Into Hastings has made our business successful
• Helped sustain jobs
• Retail has done well with retail parks
• Low pay and employment
• Can pay our workforce more because we are successful

Discussion about future challenges
• Need infrastructure to support regeneration initiatives: the new wave
Good that Jerwood has seem fit to input investment for Hastings
We need a vehicle to build momentum
NCH – local youngsters, need infrastructure to keep them
Qualification of 16-19 year olds
Demands of future businesses are to employ people who have knowledge and skills
Bringing people from outside
2 Academies – employability status
Demographic has changed in last 20-30 years. Flats: welfare ethic has to be dealt with (post-war) using incentives
End of London Road just moves the bottle neck to somewhere else + at top of Queensway on to ridge
Issue of getting from Bexhill Castle Ham and Churchfields
How many cars have single occupancy?
Think about car sharing
Links in & out of Bexhill/ Hastings area; A21 improvement works on hold
Similar problems around Arundel
Congestion at either end can be future challenge
Fear of children being approached walking t school
Q for 35-40 minutes for school run
Queensway gridlock by schools; Crowhurst rat run
Time it takes to get anywhere, additional hour at end of day

Main solutions to these challenges
- We need a bypass for through traffic. Coastal towns that don’t have these problems have a bypass. There is no other solution
- We just caught the wrong Government. Lost out ‘don’t come back ever again to talk about a bypass’ – investment in rail
- Waited over 60 years
- How many miles of motorway in East Sussex? 5 miles of dual carriageway
- We can’t dump it all on Crowhurst
- It was going to come out on Eastbourne merger road A27/A259
- Link Road shifts the problem
- Pragmatic option is take Link road in the short & lobby for bypass
- You will not get a bypass in a measurable time
- Cut cost - £20m a mile – what’s contactor’s profit margin?
- Mitigation for landscape: cut back on this would reduce cost
- Link is positive approach
- Link Road is better than nothing but didn’t solve it
- Short-term
- 2092 needs upgrading
- Releasing industrial space + regeneration. Releases opportunities for north of Bexhill = main reason for Link Road
- Link Road releases land to allow regeneration to happen

Role of transport
- Taking bus not viable because of congestion
- 3 shift system no way of getting people to work. Infrastructure not built for working environment
- 2 ¼ hours by bus because it stops everywhere on the 12 mile route. Not viable
- I have 5 mile drive to get milk
- CC has shared responsibilities for bus routes. Extra services for people needing to get to work
- Easier to take bike/ car
- Bicycle. Walking to work is possible
- Focusing on the car is denying a service to those who are not car users. They are dependent on public transport
- Heavy transport using roads as short cuts. Off load @ Dover and put them on a rail
• Freight trains in Germany – run when passenger traffic not using; should use rail for moving goods around
• It is possible

**Views on Link Road**
• At the end of the day we might be in exactly the same position (e.g. Newbery)
• A259 traffic is not going to take a 5 mile detour to use Link road
• If you are in Bexhill you will cut through
• Work going on to Queensway, to A21 with speed traffic up to A21 – current route tortuous
• Both ends have to be properly integrated with existing road system ‘pinch points’
• We’ve got to do it ‘now’ please, but very much 2nd best solution – Don’t forget DfT makes decision
• Do it now – we’re in a depression so prepare for upturn
• Contract for this to a German firm – they would use local people
• No point in building in excess of 3000 houses if there is no infrastructure. Orthodox solution, no innovation
• Original line of proposed Link Road runs through Area of Outstanding Beauty
• Current proposals avoid this
• South East fares
• Significant difference in fares – skewed against people travelling to coastal areas
• History of area – result from regeneration of Hastings. Link Road is the next step in regeneration
• Cost is employing consultants: something could have been done

**Summary sheet**

**Challenges**

- Intolerable congestion
  - Inhibiting job creation and business expansion
  - Stifling the benefits of regeneration

**Solutions**

- Link Road a positive stepping stone
- Avoid creating new bottle necks @ start and end of Link Road
- We’ve got to do it now, but very much second best solution. Best solution = Bypass, preferred option
- Prepare for upturn by doing it now

**Group 2 (AvM)**

**Discussion recorded by facilitator onto flip chart paper**

**Challenges facing residents and businesses in Bexhill/ Hastings area**
(written on post it notes by participants)

**Current challenges**

- Unemployment
- Low pay
- Employment
- Crime
- Relative poverty
- Care for other people
- Education levels too low
- Public transport
- Transport
- Travel
- Traffic congestion
- Supporting our members in Hastings
Getting to meetings in Hastings on time
Bexhill Road; St Leonards and Little Common
Regeneration
Need to regenerate Hastings and Bexhill
Survival of rural areas
Insufficient business growth: internal and external to area
Growth and development of local economy to create wealth and jobs
Local economy
Ensuring all parts of community can engage in economic opportunities

Future challenges
Create employment
Find suitable employees: what type suits educational status now & future
Employability of young people
Difficulty finding qualified staff; is linked to transport issue
Regeneration
St Leonards complete regeneration around Warrior Square station
Are new retail parks considered – if not this will push new residents in the proposed development back onto the A259 to get to Ravenside
Transport and infrastructure
Traffic/ bad road system
Improved infrastructure
Inward investment
Attracting external investment
Less opportunity if we do nothing
Decline
Businesses require major roads to A21 and A22 to entice them into area; units at Churchfields are empty because of lack of these links
Over population
Carbon neutral transport and living
Impact of development on education, infrastructure, water etc
We need to look at the land use North of Bexhill before considering the Link Road; create a Local Community Trust

Discussion about challenges
Unemployment/ employment
Need to create jobs
However: difficult to find qualified staff
Relative poverty is linked to deprivation and unemployment
Education levels too low for regeneration: which one is cart which horse?

Local economy
Insufficient growth because of transport/ traffic issue
Important to ensure all parts of community can engage in economic growth
If we do nothing there will be less opportunity and more decline

Transport
We are disconnected from more affluent areas
Insufficient train & bus services
Foreign coaches on country roads get stuck, certainly in Crowhurst
Are the figures right? 70% congestion going into Bexhill/Hastings area; 30% going out of area?
No dual carriageways A21

Survival of rural areas
Small communities have large increase of traffic going through village; no lights; cars drive at high speed
Rural area is second to none; is not been sold by ESCC at all
Getting tractors backwards and forwards is hard
Sustainability
- Hastings is converting houses into flats encouraging people to move into area, this is not sustainable as there are no plans for additional facilities including schools
- Important to consider impact of development on infrastructure, water etc

Attracting external investment
- It needs to be attractive for businesses to move into the area
- Inward investment needed to enable local businesses to grow and move on

Main solution to these challenges
- Bring new businesses into area to help unemployment and education (apprenticeships) addressing sustainability issues if attracting more residents
- Build more roads, there is no inch of motor way in Sussex, no dual carriageways
- Something needs to be done even though not sure this is the right plan; it’s only half way, we won’t solve all issues in area with one road. With new housing developments and nowhere for these people to go it’s pushing traffic back along A259
- Different types of employment need to be created: service employment, tourist type jobs, and manufacturing jobs. BHLR is an opportunity as it is offering development options
- We need dual carriage ways (BHLR is not dual carriageway))
- Why a new road? If you move cars, you move congestions, car parks etc. Would be better to have a metro/ tram type system
- Consider Land Community Trust
- Train issues need to be tackled: it takes longer to get to London and East/ West now that 75 years ago; insufficient number of carriages
- Look at immigration: businesses can’t find right employees whilst at same time people leaving the area. As a result jobs taken by new arrivals

Role of transport in this discussion
- Need to improve transport system to regenerate area
- Transport is an issue; however current scheme is development proposal
- Transport is a means to an end: we need to improve economy and wellbeing of area, which is the root problem; transport plays a role in this. It’s about addressing a mix of issues
- Did ESCC undertake sufficient outward research? Other regeneration options?

Views on BHLR
- Its primary purpose was to improve local transport. Now land for development seems to have become more important
- Wrong solution: single carriageway
- It’s half a road and half a solution; traffic will still need to go back to Hastings or Bexhill
- If we do nothing, nothing will improve: things will get worse and worse
- BHLR will not alleviate traffic in Bexhill, cars will still need to get through village
- Does alleviate some of the traffic, still better than it is now
- Would it be better to spend the money on improving the East Sussex side of A21?
- Link with A21 is crucial
- It’s a solution for local congestion
- We have not seen any evidence that this road is going to contribute to regeneration: what is the cost-benefit ratio? (benefits of Link Road have no real economic value)
- It releases land which is needed for houses and businesses

Other comments
- Too many people are happy to make decisions without looking at all the facts
- ESCC hasn’t published recent data/ research

Summary sheet
Challenges
- Transport/ road
- Low education levels
- (Un)employment
• Sustainability issues of new development
• Improve quality of life/ wellbeing
• Poverty
• Crime
• Attracting new business: right package

Solutions
• Improve road structure
• Improve main links A21/ A27
• Improve transport not just road
• Attract business to create employment
• Raising educational levels local population + increase employability

BHLR
• Poor/ no evidence that it contributes to regeneration
• I rather have this than nothing
• It’s half a solution
• Mixed views (2 in favour/ 11 against)

Group 3 (HI)
Discussion recorded by facilitator onto flip chart paper

Initial comment
Questions were raised about what the purpose is of the discussion today – are we going over old ground? What impact does the discussion have on the bid? Shouldn’t we be helping with the bid?

Challenges facing residents and businesses in Bexhill/ Hastings area
(written on post it notes by participants)

Employment
• Unemployment
• Current – employment; future – employment

Traffic and transport
• Traffic on A259
• Traffic congestion – coming into town
• Transport – road network to the town – Hastings
• Abysmal transport congestion from E – W – N and on sea from S
• Inadequate public transport affected by congestions
• Movement of goods and services

Land for industry to develop
• Availability of building land for regeneration (alleviating deprivation)

Business growth
• Business profitability in current economic circumstances in UK and competition from abroad
• Getting the right skills for business growth
• 180° catchment – ‘Terminus town’ (north/south) difficult for business growth

Other
• The pier
• Parking for town centre businesses [staff and customers] in Hastings
• Government withdrawal of funding to support the capital investment made by previous government
• Lack of money
Discussion about current challenges
- Transport links from Dover, A27 – what is the proposal for how they intent to improve links from Lewes to Dover? It would be interesting to know what the proposals are
- Business would like to see better access to London (A21)
- Government has spent £ on regeneration in Hastings areas; opening up building land is very important to business, opening up business land
- How do we get the Government to say yes to our bid?

Businesses and the link
- We will get improved broad band which is positive
- The land is very precious for development and industry
- We need to encourage British industry – high tech industry
- This land (NE Bexhill) is the only area available for industry expansion

Traffic
- Traffic on the in-between part is rubbish – the volume of traffic, difficulty getting out of my driveway
- Commuting along the road is very difficult, numerous traffic lights causing further congestion
- Access to and from the two locations of the hospital is crucial – link road would be a godsend
- Link road will result in a new station and Witting Farm; this would support commuting to London as on Victoria branch, and other knock on benefits
- Accidents levels in Ballards Hill and Henley’s Down – what are they? Concern?
- Couldn’t we have built the link already! So much money has been spent on discussion and debate!
- Pollution from traffic is also a problem

Main solutions to challenges
Other solutions to the challenges depend on the link being built
- Lorries could go on the link road, rather than using the existing road
- Who will benefit? Hastings? Bexhill? Both?
- The link is an alternative solution to rail. Why not open up old railway lines?
- Can you put a weight limit for lorries on what goes through the town?
- Employment will be helped by the link road
- Another person suggestion another outer M25 road which would link up other areas
- A better bus service would be possible with the link road

Views on Link Road
- Will there be access points to the link road?
- Sort it out! And make the link happen, so it benefits everyone
- Need a comprehensive bus service, bus routes currently too far away
- Twin themes
  1. Business growth and deprivation issues
  2. Address congestion issues along the road and related issues e.g. health, pollution, lead, fatalities
  Don’t throw out the baby with the bath water!
- East-West commuter issues also need addressing as part of link road
- Discussion about coastal towns – one person thought other coastal towns have similar issues, and it might be possible to work together. Others then commented on the unique circumstances in this area which makes it different other coastal areas.
- But we are a unique area! Only place with a major road going through it
- There is outmoded road infrastructure, it is a special case, geography of area
- None of us our ‘natural road builders’ but the link road is needed, if it is done in the right way.
- All members of the group supported the link road
• Question was raised about whether a western bypass is needed to make the link road work?
• The link road is a local solution to a local problem
• The link would create concentration of employment which will make public transport planning easier
• There was acknowledgment that some local residents have concerns about traffic coming into their local area
• In the winter there is grid lock in this area, the link road will ease the problem
• Need to encourage the link contractor to employ local people
• Young people are the hardest to reach – they will be in favour of the link road if it creates jobs. They are the future of the economy. The silent majority, like the young, should be consulted.
• There is no other way than the link road that the land for development can be opened up
• There may be other transport solutions e.g. road, rail, but we don’t want those
• Proposal for a Bexhill & Hastings 10 K run – a one off before the link road opens
• Could we save money by shortening the route? It is unlikely to happen on ecological grounds
• We need investment in education alongside the link road. But another person said, this has been done already. Now we need to create jobs for people locally

Summary sheet

Challenges
• Continuation of regeneration
• Deprivation: especially young people and jobs
• Traffic: congestion + related issues, e.g. air quality, pollution, accidents, commuting, emergency access, access to schools and colleges
• Keep economy growing

Solutions
• The solution is the Link Road
• And associated housing, development, etc around the Link Road
• Road will release land for economic development (and this is the only land that is available)
• The Link Road will help to ease the traffic situation
• This has been going for a long time…..
• It has already been approved. It would have started if it wasn’t for the cuts
Evening session Hastings

Group 1 (HH)
Discussions recorded by facilitator onto flip chart paper

Challenges facing residents and businesses in Bexhill/ Hastings area
(written on post it notes by participants)

Current challenges
- Malign influence of A259 congestion on shopping patterns
- Travel town to other towns/ cities is very long
- Travel to work time
- Transport seems last on the list of priorities on Introduction slides
- Lack of economic links between Bexhill & Hastings
- Limited public transport
- Creating an affordable, accessible and sustainable public transport system for the next (& future) generations
- Restricted ‘free’ parking
- Impact of congestion on public transport
- Enhancing & developing the features which make the area unusual, special and, in some ways, unique
- Deprivation: Hastings & Bexhill have very serious issues
- Lack of well paid career opportunities
- Limited high aid employment
- Educated people leave the area (no opportunity)

Future challenges
- Encouraging ‘green travel’ options – Hastings geography makes cycling the choice of the physically fit
- When/ if there is a growth period local infrastructure may not cope
- Link Road will transfer one trouble spot to another: the Ridge with 3 schools and hospital
- Demographics changing: older people & Hastings is very hilly so not as attractive as a ‘flat’ locale
- New world! (New economy!) Have and Have not’s!
- Successful region need to be well connected
- Internet business park when broadband speed is so poor
- Willing station Park n Ride V V T C
- Discourage employers who come to Hastings to offer lower salaries to staff here than in London, e.g. ‘Saga’ Customer Service
- With a Link Road in place – will the commercials units built be driven by demand or by aspirations?

Discussion about challenges
Transport
- We’re trying to get a Link Road but intro suggests transport is at bottom of list. Must be a priority of Las to get it though
- Businesses working globally
  - Airports
  - Travel time is big issue, takes too long
- Given economic situation are we certain £ for Link Road and other schemes will still be there?

Congestion
- Bexhill shoppers prefer to do non food shopping in Eastbourne rather than Hastings
- Very little trade attracted from Bexhill
- Serious congestion a lot of cars / lorries for a narrow road)
- M&S proposing Riverside retail park
- Unreliability of A259 bus services (20-30 minutes late in middle of day)
- Short time for travel will bring employment. People aren’t going to set up businesses here if no infrastructure
- Need people out of work but have ideas for running businesses need accommodation. We need nursery units. With Admin support to assist small businesses to grow
- Essential that public transport is improved – particularly link to London on rail
- Rail development is privately financed undermined by rod building
- Admitted at PI (Saga 800 jobs) that Hastings had weathered the recession
- Has been a priority for every council for improving connectivity
- Road schemes do not necessarily support regeneration – research over 20 years. In some cases can actually weaken regeneration
- Not for want of prioritising it, but every proposal has to be matched against national evidence
- Small industrial sites will be out of town and will need to use car. One bus only runs once or twice in the morning and will take an hour. Can get there in car in 15 minutes
- Roads major enquiry 20 years ago – ITT moved out because of road system
- Bid around regeneration rather than congestion alleviation
- Poor levels of education
- People leaving the area (UCH; Bexhill High School) – will take good few years to filter through
- Low sped (holding on to £; on benefits)
- Area doesn’t generate wealth
- Education and employment needed e.g. brand new building in South Wales. Our business could have brought in 1000 jobs – we didn’t
- Trains form Ashford if had been left dual track. Have to go into London to come back + reconnect with Channel Tunnel
- A21 links Hastings to London – single carriageway, what message does this send?
- We could have train infrastructure running very fast
- Willing Farm Station + development of Bus network Hollington Bus Station
- Changes in society: have and have not’s. No longer triangle rich-middle class- working class, now big oval shape of mostly middle class with very rich and very poor on the edges
- Being well connected getting right people into the area
- Can’t cycle between Bexhill & Hastings, not safe
- Within hilly Hastings it discourages people from cycling after a long journey home: carbon footprint
- Air quality/ emissions
- I see units go up. Are they designed and built because there is a request or is it just perceived as good?
- Ask entrepreneurs what they want
- Challenge is to get a range of opportunities – how do you do that
- Developers paying for infrastructure going in – how much is this the case here? Access road/ Link Road should be paid for by developers who will benefit
- China and America investing billions in rail network to connect deprived with well off
- If you can improve transport links you can give people access to a range of opportunities – travel to Brighton/ London
- Image: people in Bexhill have gone the other way from Hastings
- Reality: it’s not a problem on the scale of congestion. It’s not about that it’s about regeneration
- W could have the Link road & businesses might not come - no guarantees that a business comes and stays
- Local people investment in the area – inward road linking 2 sections
- Encourage people who work for themselves in new units
- Few people commute into Hastings
- Lost tourist trade – no coaches
- Habits and behaviours people wont just go going to drop the car and get on the train
- Bring back workman’s ticket for those who are bringing something to the economy + for students
Main solutions to these challenges

- Faster train links
- Build road with a link
- Use new Jerwood Gallery as impetus for opening up Hastings to London (‘Boden Army’ life 2nd house in Hastings)
- Develop university to change educational profile of town
- Rental values £4-5 sq foot. Have no regeneration £ to fill that gap
- Have confidence to build up rental values – make commitments
- Opportunities for businesses to come down here as cost of operations lower
- Wilting Station proposal incorporate park and ride + at supermarkets – free bus Bexhill/Hastings
- If ESCC not successful then funding has to be found elsewhere
- Station – at Wyland Gap
- Section 106 money
- Network Rail is going to brand stations East Hastings. Rebranding Hastings as desirable
- Big up the town – local people have the wrong idea. You have to come here to know that
- Any solution has to cater for people who don’t drive. Old people
- Public transport – accessible supermarkets
- Look at car-less figures
- Travel to London = issue: not only slower but far more expensive than car/ coach
- Bring back limited stock 1.5 hours

Views on Link Road

- On plan: ordinary cross roads at Bexhill and T-junction at Queensway. Both should be roundabouts. So many accidents: slow traffic down
- Problem, particularly at southern end
- Who will use the Link Road? Is it for locals – through route from Dover to Eastbourne? London traffic to Bexhill?
- Most local. About 95% of traffic end and begins at Bexhill and Hastings and is going to retail park. Very long detour
- Driven by signage
- Emphasis on Link Road for through traffic
- Watermill Lane as a rat run
- The ridge has got 3 schools and a hospital. School girls at Helenswood can not walk without risking life
- 2000 – seen as capacity
- Ridge west: 15%; nr Grange road 26%
- Areas that will see a decrease in traffic will go
- Overall effect in reducing traffic would be neutral
- I don’t know – more decreases than increases
- No parking on ridge
- School run traffic at peak times. If you had better public transport, walk, cycle path you would have a better solution. Same argument applies now
- Crazy to have any road scheme which just transfers congestion from one area to another
- Ambulance will use Link Road and then congestion trying to get onto Queensway. Junction road + A21 – congestion bottle neck
- Could create opportunities: could generate more bus routes and open public transport
- Industrial units along the Link Road
- Good having a planned area for employment opportunities
- Risk of more retail out of town centre: do we want to draw people out of town centre?
- Micro brewery would be an out of town business
- Planning will change – localism bill etc. Let the market take care of itself – it’s for the town centre to compete
- Do we prefer retail to stay in town centre – small ‘subsistence’ businesses; - not entrepreneurial
- If you want these you need size of site to make this viable – confidence
- Get rid of residents parking 8 am – 6 pm
- Shared parking. After 6 pm that’s fair enough
• Q: speed limit? Is it fast
• Q: can it include 106 contributions?

Accessibility
• Time past which people want to travel to work is 22 minutes. It would save a minute and a half.
• 65% of Central St Leonards unemployed people (ONS) is careless; Eastbourne 36%
• Possibility that development will be as accessible for cars from Eastbourne

Cost
• Competitive pot for 45 schemes
• Link Road more expensive (65%) than other a sample of 158 schemes assessed – Sir Roger
• Decided on pound per square metre rather than cost/ benefit
• It’s about economic benefit + mitigation: housing – costs around environment

Summary sheet
• External links
• Improved employment opportunities
• Congestion is an impetus for regeneration: balance important
• Risks that we can’t guarantee regeneration through the Link Road
• Doing nothing → Have not society
• Importance of public transport and bus

Group 2 (AvM)
Discussions recorded by facilitator onto flip chart paper

Challenges facing residents and businesses in Bexhill/ Hastings area
(written on post it notes by participants)

Current challenges
• Aspiration of young people
• Youth unemployment and lack of aspiration
• Recruitment
• Drugs problems and police funding
• Sustaining our business against competition
• To considerably ease traffic flows in and around Hastings and Bexhill
• Accessibility in and out of Hastings and Bexhill
• Traffic congestion A259
• Bexhill and Hastings are regionally remote

Future challenges
• Value of company property
• Growth/ employment
• Attracting business investment and employment
• To increase employment when public sector is cut back
• To increase means of communication
• Competition in business – extension of markets
• Regeneration momentum
• Train service to provide better links to commute
• Providing a structure to entice businesses to relocate and education so that they are able to recruit staff here
• Making seaside towns commercially attractive
Discussion about challenges

Recruitment
- Lack of aspiration of young people: there is real talent, however no aspiration to explore beyond Hastings; need to build up confidence of young people
- Schools have a role to play in this; young people are not learning skills to compete
- Talent needs to be exploited
- Those young people that do succeed in education don’t stay as salaries are so low
- Hard to find staff: people don’t seem to be bothered to get a job
- Those who are good leave; this is a huge challenge for young businesses trying to develop

Deprivation
- Large Victorian houses lend themselves to multiple occupation
- Police funding has been cut; residents help policing the streets
- Lack of investment: it’s as if we’re still in the fifties
- Mustn’t forget that one of the big pro’s of Hastings is that there is a real community feel; people know each other

Growth/employment
- A259 is restrictor to growth; it costs us much more to deliver goods
- Poor accessibility is disadvantage for businesses who want to invest in area
- Hard to convince bank to loan money for business expansion (property purchase) due to lack of infrastructure and bad accessibility
- Bad accessibility is hindering growth: we could extend business all the way up to London at reduced cost if public transport was better
- For the business community to compete we need a level playing field

Main solutions
- Positive intervention to get investment channelled to areas that need it. Fact that we are in rich part of country is disadvantage. We’re not seen to need investment. Must raise awareness Central Government/ educate and influence. Sea Space brought these skills to area 5 years ago, must keep this going
- Positive role models to inspire young people
- Make people work for their money
- Education system should be geared toward vocational courses and apprenticeships
- Make Hastings more attractive for businesses: better roads, improved accessibility
- Making big fuss about lifestyle here: better PR. It’s very special, community spirit. Create positive image. We have diverse retail. There is a cultural buzz.
- Strengths Hastings: quality of life; stimulating ambiance; environment; Country Park; Alexandra Park
- Celebrate successes, e.g. Business Award 2011 for Indian restaurant St Leonards
- Broadband is not the solution, it’s part of the solution – we need young people who aspire to work in sector and have good links

Role of transport
- We’ve got to have better transport and road links
- Hastings is left with South Coast trunk road alongside seaside; other towns in South east don’t suffer from this
- Hastings must not be left out in terms of rail improvement. Focus is on Tunbridge Wells; Canon Street service is under threat; Wadhurst Tunnel is problem (one track) – so for rail companies it’s easier and more cost effective to terminate line at Tunbridge Wells

Views on Link Road
- Need Link road to ease congestion off A259
- Improved facilities along A259
- Give new road other name, is confusing. A259 is link road
- What happens at Queensway: congestion
- Link Road needs to be part of much wider concept/ vision to include traffic flow from A21
- Having Link Road is better than nothing
Q: How much relief does Link Road give to A259?
Must be applauded by people in Crowhurst as lots of drivers bypass A259 by going through and around the back of Crowhurst
Area for development both at Bexhill. Q: what are they going to be used for? What contribution are they going to make to issues mentioned? How do they fit overall development plan for Bexhill and Hastings?
Link Road would benefit tourism to Delaware as part of artist trail
Opens up attractive sites for commercial investment

Summary sheet
Challenges
- Lack of aspiration young people and poor education
- Public and private transport
- Poor regional accessibility
- Lack of investment
- Low salaries
- Business growth hindered

Solutions
- Investment through better transport
- Educate and influence Central Government that we’re not affluent despite being situated in South East England
- Make Bexhill and Hastings more attractive for businesses: accessibility
- Better PR for area; celebrate success and build on strengths + quality of life
- Risks that we can’t guarantee regeneration through the Link Road

Views on Link Road
- Opening up areas for development
- Concern: what happens at top of Queensway?
- Need Link Road to ease congestion A259
- Need to be clear about wider vision for area
- Contribution to a solution, not the full answer
- Would help ease potential health issues

Group 3 (HI)
Discussions recorded by facilitator onto flip chart paper

Challenges facing residents and businesses in Bexhill/ Hastings area
(written on post it notes by participants)

Jobs
- Lack of jobs
- Providing more new jobs and skills training for local people

Business and economic growth
- Future – attracting new business to the area
- Attract more businesses to this area
- Lack of property product in Hastings/Bexhill areas
- Lack of viability of development
- Business to create more wealth in this area
- Solution to the lack of development on this stretch of A259

Land for new development and environmental constraints
- Finding land for new development in built up part of Hastings

Roads, traffic, links
- Poor road links
- Access to town
Home, local environment
- To make the residential environment pollution free
- Proving enough new homes so everyone can have access to a decent home
- General deprivation

Tourism
- Hasting seasonal events
- Holiday diversity in Hastings/area (future)

Other
- Area infrastructure

Discussion about challenges
- Lack of blending between urban and rural areas
- Unemployment and lack of development in Hastings; shouldn’t they focus on redeveloping existing areas before developing new areas
- Local areas have action plans e.g. Battle
- Economic regeneration is needed (e.g. business start ups) before new housing
- Focus on rebuilding current areas rather than accessing new areas
- But this is not attractive to developers
- There isn’t enough economic activity currently to provide jobs etc
- Companies like Saga could be encouraged to come here
- Even if there is demand from businesses who want to move to the area, there aren’t the developers willing to rebuild existing areas
- But the land is cheap here; it is a marketing job to attract businesses here
- There are very few development sites in the area for commercial development: the market works for residential development, but not commercial development
- Local Development Frameworks are part of the process of identifying sites
- But the Frameworks don’t mean that development will happen
- There are very few development sites currently
- But what about Marley Junction with the A21?
- Is unemployment situation constrained by lack of development space? Yes
- Better communication will bring forward the Rother LDF

Main solutions to these challenges
- You need the infrastructure in place first e.g. roads, links, rail
- Be clear to the public about what road and rail links are meant to do and how they work together
- Better public transport is part of the solution
- Railway halt at Glyne Gap would enable people to access local area
- We need a better bus service
- People need to be educated e.g. to move from cars to bikes, raise awareness about bus services
- Need better integration of bus services e.g. better service at specific times
- Hastings only coastal town with an A road running along it – once the link is in place we can campaign for a bypass
- This link should be part of an integrated road link/plan

Views on the Link Road
- Do bypasses take people away from smaller towns?
  No, because those places have character
- Concern about exit into Queensway – where does the traffic go? A2100 to A21? East to London and west and then on to London – neither are a good idea until the junction in that area is addressed
- The Borough Council supports the link; its beneficial for regeneration, jobs and helping local business
- I’m concerned there wont be enough money to do the plans properly and the environment will suffer
• Discussions about where traffic moves to – isn’t the Link moving the traffic problem somewhere else
• Concern that residents living in the new proposed residential area will still want to move in a Southerly direction e.g. to Tesco
• What sort of housing will be built in the new area? Social housing/affordable housing are needed
• Planning Committee members of Rother and Hastings will devise how to address social housing
• The new housing will create value and enable commercial development – as long as it is done properly – well structured schemes
• But… we need to address social problems, jobs in the area for local people – a concern was expressed that the Link road and related development will just bring in new people and new business to the area, and not address local social issues e.g. creating local jobs, affordable housing
• There is a danger the local population will be excluded if there are newcomers
• The 5 point plan is addressing education and training, which in turn helps local people get jobs
• If you build executive housing it may result in people commuting out of the area (expressed as a concern)
• Another person raised concerns about holiday homes
• Rother have a Master plan for Bexhill area which addresses these issues
• One participant explained the role of a Master plan in addressing issues raised: The role of a master plan is to provide a vision for the area that addresses all these aspects e.g. residential, commercial development. This goes into a core strategy and is enshrined in planning law. When they go to market, developers have constraints on what they can and cannot do
• The road will address congestion issues as well as opening up access for development
• It is very important to address the eastern end of the link, the junction and what happens on the ridge
• Need to make seafront road less attractive to traffic so it moves onto the Link Road; this was raised in response to a question about whether traffic travelling to Dover would use the link
• How traffic flows/routes from Link road into Hastings needs careful consideration
• If traffic doesn’t use that route this system will fail
• Need to consider water, drains, electricity – needs to be included in plans

**Summary sheet**

**Challenges**
- Business and economic growth (land for development)
- Jobs
- Roads, traffic and links
- Home, local environment
- Tourism

**Solutions**
- Opportunity to improve communications which will facilitate economic development and create employment space as part of land allocation
- Bypass will create this opportunity

**Views on Link Road**
- Need to consider what happens at Queensway, The Ridge and Baldstow junction with A21 & also need to think about route west & guided route in centre of Hastings
- As part of new development plans address affordable housing
- Pebsham Countryside park plans need to be part of Link Road Plans
- General views:
  1. Don’t do it if you can’t afford to do it properly
  2. Build it as soon as possible and then get on with bypass
  3. Concern about High Street in battle and junction at Baldstow
  4. Do it, it is part of the plan and will help regeneration
Any other thoughts cards

Hopkins Van Mil encouraged focus group participants to use ‘Any other thoughts’ postcard in to write down anything else that sprung to mind. Four participants used this opportunity to express the following:

‘I do not feel the link road will contribute anything useful. What needs to be improved and upgraded are:

1. Existing routes in and out of Hastings/Bexhill
2. Train times/prices and journey times
3. St Leonards Warrior Square and Kings Road need to be REGENERATED not curbing parking & widening pavements for empty shops’

‘The Link road is NOT a By-Pass (by-pass refused in 2001) but is a Local Road justified by big benefits in relation to low cost (short length). Therefore GREATER return on money spent’

‘Do it now!’
(Peter Adlington – E: peter.adlington.co.uk

‘The more I have looked at the proposed Link Road it seems to me this is half a bypass. When does Hastings get the other half?’
(Keith Griffiths, 12 Mann Street, Hastings TN34 1SE, E: keithgriffiths12.plus.com)

HVM 14 July 2011
Appendix 5: Evaluation results

1. Opportunity to express views
100% of participants in both focus groups said they had enough opportunity to express their views.

2. Event environment, catering, Introductory session, Small group facilitator, Small group discussion outcomes
3. Clarity about next steps

Coeden Beach: To what extent are you clear about East Sussex Council's next steps with regards to the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road?
4. Pre-event activity

Hastings: How did you find the following pre-event activity?

- Excellent
- Good
- Satisfactory
- Poor

- Booking your place as a participant
- Information given prior to the event
Appendix 6: Comments non-attendants

Sent : Fri 01/07/2011 14:27

Dear Sirs

I am unable to attend the consultations on Monday, July 11th but I wish to register the fact that I am fully and firmly behind the Link Road project. The two towns have a seriously below standard road link at present and as a Hastings based business, I have to allow at least 45 minutes to do the 5 miles between the towns, still with no guarantee of arriving at a meeting on time. With the £millions invested in regeneration in the area, it seems ridiculous that the final piece of the jigsaw is not seen as a vitally important part of that regeneration.

Your faithfully

Graham How
Marketing Consultant

36 Tilekiln Lane
Hastings
East Sussex
TN35 5EN

T 01424 434476
M 07860 520637

Sent : Mon 11/07/2011 14:58

Dear Mr. Robertson,

I regret that I have been unable to attend your presentations today but would confirm the continued support of myself and Manningtons to the link road. Our support has been unwavering since the widely publicised Folkstone Honiton bypass and trunk road stalled.

Like many businesses in the area we have seen our growth restricted by the lack of a road and integrated transport system which is on a par with other parts of the country. Over the years various businesses have relocated to areas which enjoy reasonable transport links and other businesses in the area continue to review their relocation options whilst lack of decisions continue.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Thomson
Manningtons
Chartered Accountants
Dear Sir or Madam,
Although unable to attend either of the meetings on this subject we would like to place on record our support for the Bexhill-Hastings link road. We are a major employer in both towns, with a total staff across our firm (Hastings, Bexhill, Eastbourne) of 165+. We are a law firm offering commercial, property, private client and litigation services. Our business model is such that not every service is offered in every office and many of our staff and clients need to travel between our offices, particularly between Bexhill and Hastings. A great deal of time and efficiency is lost due to the poor road connection between the two towns. It is often impracticable for the journey to be undertaken by train due to the need to transport office supplies, files of papers, or to travel at short notice. In practice we are obliged to allow up to one hour when travelling by road from our Bexhill office to court in Hastings, time which is never fully remunerated to us. As more and more firms discontinue the provision of publicly-funded legal services for reasons of economy – particularly in Family Law including domestic violence and childcare cases – access to justice for Bexhill residents is becoming threatened, compounded by the congested nature of the A259.

If you require any further information on this subject please contact me.

Yours faithfully,

David Getty
Partner/ Head of Commercial Law Services

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Sent: 25 June 2011

From: Caroleninabest@aol.com [mailto:Caroleninabest@aol.com]
To: Sue Buxton
Subject: Re: Expressions, Residents' Panel - Another consultation opportunity

Hallo Sue- thank you for your invite to meetings about the proposed new road- Hastings to Bexhill. Sorry to say that I am still at work HOWEVER off the record I make this journey 12 times
a year to get to the tunnel on my way to my French property and I say- Thank heavens and ABOUT TIME!!!!

Kind regards,

Carole Williamson

Sent: 24 June 2011

From: David and Anne [mailto:dcandea@tiscali.co.uk]
To: Sue Buxton
Cc: Councillor Anthony Reid
Subject: RE: Expressions, Residents’ Panel - Another consultation opportunity

Dear Ms Buxton

As places are limited for these events, I think it is appropriate to decline at this stage and leave more opportunity for those local to the proposed project. However, as a retired transportation professional who resigned from ESCC in 1979, disillusioned even then over the authority’s failure to invest in the local highway network, I must express full support for this proposed scheme. ESCC has under-invested in transport infrastructure for decades with the consequential impact on economic development. One only has to look to Newhaven as a prime example of totally wasted potential over many years. So any investment, especially in these difficult times, is to be fully supported. It has been a failing of the transportation industry over many years to convince our elected representatives that good, effective and efficient transport links are vital for economic prosperity. Such infrastructure can only be achieved by a clear commitment to strategic investment.

David Hutchinson