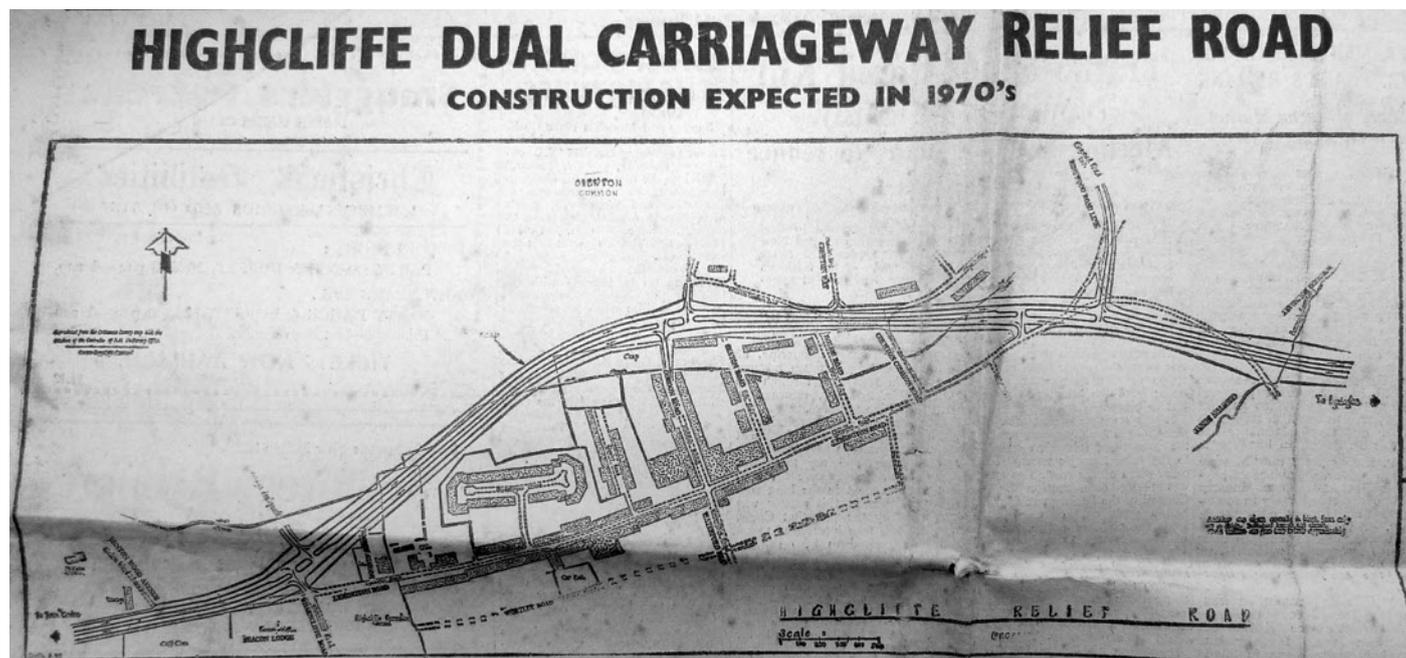


HIGHCLIFFE DUAL CARRIAGEWAY RELIEF ROAD CONSTRUCTION EXPECTED IN THE 1970'S

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THE proposed 100 to 120 ft. wide Highcliffe relief road dual carriageway was not likely to be constructed until the 1970's. Its estimated cost of £180,000 would probably be £¼ million by the time it was finished. Of this, 75% would come from Government funds and 25% from County funds.

These facts were given to members of the Highcliffe Citizens' Association on Monday, when Mr. E. B Wise, Christchurch Borough Surveyor, and Mr. K. A. N. Thwaite, senior engineer in the County Surveyor's office spoke on and answered questions about the relief road.

A number of members criticised the fact that the road would cut off many residents from the shopping centre, but were told that they were faced with either having houses divided from the shops or the whole village from the sea, and a scheme that would have resulted in the latter had already been turned down by the Ministry of Transport.

Mr. Wise commenced by stating that the road, from the east, would cut off the wide sweep near the Milestone and would then run to the north of Lymington Road, through Elphinstone Road and cutting across Gordon Road. It would continue along the margin of the common, then cut through Cobbs Caravan Camp and part of the chalet development at the rear of the Globe public house, to re-join Lymington Road roughly opposite Wharncliffe Road. There would be a new road from the Wolhayes Estate joining the relief road, also nearly opposite the junction with Wharncliffe Road,

Mr. Thwaite explained that the road was intended to start at Lanes cross-roads, New Milton—in which area quite large sections of land had been purchased—and to continue as far as Somerford roundabout. It was to be a distributive road for traffic through the district, which was now a conurbation, and traffic conditions showed that it was needed.

Obviously with a road such as this the number of junctions had to be kept to a minimum. Hinton Wood Avenue would be blocked off and superseded by Castle Avenue, while Chewton Way would not be connected to the relief road, and traffic would have to go through to Gordon Road.

Dealing with the 30 years' "chequered" history of the road, Mr. Wise said that where they had a proposed new road, or major widening of an existing road, it had to be planned many years before it was built. From that time onwards all applications for development of land and building must conform to the plans, otherwise the route could not be preserved.

This was what had happened in the present case. In some cases property had already been bought along its length with local funds. So the road was not merely a plan on paper but was planned in actuality. Although

the relief road had been planned before the war, there was a period after the war when it came in for the closest examination, in which the Highcliffe Citizens' Association took part.

In 1956/58 a very careful review of the road was undertaken, primarily by the County Council, but in close consultation with the Borough Council and Ministry of Transport. At the outset Christchurch Council were not happy about the proposal, because it severed the centre of the village from land to the north which they knew was going to be developed. A series of joint meetings were held at Winchester and during the course of that review a number of alternatives were considered, both to the north and south of Lymington Road. To the north was a route known as the green route, which came from the A337 near Old Milton, made for the railway, went along to the south of it, and joined the A35 at the top of Roeshot Hill.

The yellow route left the A337 just the other side of the Borough boundary, crossed the common, through Walkford and Glenville Roads, and crossed the railway to join the A35 just to the south of the old vicarage. A blue route was very quickly dropped on the grounds that building development already ruled it out. To the south of Lymington Road was a brown route through Montagu Road, crossed Beacon Lodge and came out at a point near the vicarage.

Lastly the orange route travelled round the western lip of Chewton Bunny, through what was now the new gardens by Greystones, and went through Beacon Lodge.

Whilst these alternatives were being discussed it was quickly realised that information was lacking as to what traffic was going to Highcliffe and what was going through. The County Council therefore carried out an origin and destination survey over a period of three days — Friday, Saturday and Sunday in August of 1956.

78% going through Highcliffe

The results showed that of the total volume of traffic, only 22% was going to Highcliffe while the remaining 78% was going through. Thus the need at that time for a relief road was clearly demonstrated. But other results were also to be deduced from the survey. Because of the traffic now using Lymington Road and congesting it in large measure, a certain proportion was very likely traffic not going far either way.

Therefore any proposal for a wide or far-flung by-pass was not going to take that traffic---in fact it was found that a far-flung route would leave one-third more traffic passing through the village than the present proposed scheme.

In the meantime the County Council had taken the point that the present proposal would sever the centre of the village from development to the north, and they felt at that time that routes to the south, through Wharncliffe Road, would be better, though Christchurch Council did not fully agree.

It was then decided that the County Surveyor did not think schemes to the Ministry for grant approval. One was a short term relief route via Wharncliffe Road, and the other a much more distant proposal—the yellow route, although the County Surveyor did not think at that time that both would be approved.

In due course the Ministry replied that they did not approve either. They were still of the opinion that the plans, now proposed, were right, because they felt there would always be a large volume of coast-wise traffic in the summer months. No attempts to take a road wide, round to the north, would be fully effective. Neither the County Council nor the Borough Council agreed, and as a result of further discussions it was decided to put in the revised Town Map both the present route and the yellow route. In the early part of this year the Minister's observations on the Town Map were received, and it was stated that the yellow route, was not acceptable and that it would be deleted.

Thus the present proposed relief road was the only one for which any funds would be made available, and whatever their feelings, this was the position.

In 1964, continued Mr. Wise, the Council's Highways Committee undertook a review of the road situation in the district following the Buchanan Report, and the Highcliffe Citizens' Association were asked for their views, which they gave in considerable detail.

The H.C.A. asked the Council to expedite the construction of the relief road in every possible way, though at the same time expressing misgivings as to its safety, and there was a request for a speed limit on the road and a really adequate pedestrian crossing at the Gordon Road junction. The matter of a pedestrian crossing was taken up by the Council with the County Surveyor, and they had in writing from him an assurance that either a subway or footbridge would be provided.

On the "very grave question" of safety, Mr. Wise said that the Christchurch by-pass had been quoted as a "sort of standard" on which one might conjecture the possible dangers of the proposed road when it had been constructed. But he did not think it should be compared.

Referring to accident reports supplied monthly by the police, Mr. Wise said he had checked last year's figures for the four summer months (June to September) for three sections of roads. The first was the Christchurch by-pass, from Somerford roundabout to Pit Site roundabout; the second the old town route (Somerford Road, Purewell, Bridge Street, and High Street); and thirdly, Barrack Road, from the roundabout to Iford Bridge.

"I found that the by-pass had a very appreciably less number of accidents than either of the two remaining stretches of road." On the by-pass during those months there were no fatalities at all.

Only the by-pass blamed!

Mr Wise said he had done the same thing for this year, and found the accident figure for the summer months to be: the old town route— 28; Barrack Road—24; by-pass—20. It was true that the by-pass figure included one fatality, but during the same period a cyclist was killed in Highcliffe Road.

"I wonder why the Christchurch by-pass has been so featured?" he asked. When an accident occurred elsewhere, it was given whatever prominence in the Press that it deserved. But when one happened on the by-pass it was "the road that caused it."

But in point of fact, if apprehension was felt about the Highcliffe relief road, it would be more graphic to compare it with Barrack Road or the old town route, than with the by-pass.

As to the cause of accidents, Mr Wise said he felt they all too readily said they were caused by this or that road, or that more money should be spent on improving roads. His belief, which he thought would be shared by many others, was that accidents were largely caused "by our own impatience, lack of consideration, our own selfishness and our own human errors in general." If by a wave of a wand they could have every conceivable road improvement carried out, he thought they would still have their own somewhat fallible human nature driving on the roads and might well have the same number of accidents. It must be generally realised there were very grave limitations to which the existing highway design could limit accidents.

Stressing that the proposed road was not a by-pass, Mr. Thwaite said it was really a new street to carry local traffic together with traffic from Lymington to Bournemouth. They looked upon the A35 as being the Highcliffe by-pass.

Although the relief road route was generally settled, from time to time ideas were revised; and any modifications that were needed would be applied in the light of modern thought. At present there was the Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch study, and the plans would be considered with the results of that study in mind.

The junctions on the relief road were one of their biggest headaches, continued Mr. Thwaite, because they would have people wanting to go in various directions and each thinking it was their turn first. Very few people understood the design of a junction and its capacity. Unless they knew how it was designed they could not really know how to use it. The designs of the junctions along the relief road were known as "hambone" (similar to the Cat & Fiddle cross-roads).

When the design had been worked out, the whole of the Wolhayes Estate was still white land---un-developed--- and Upper Gordon Road was a minor street. It was now realised that the junctions were going to be much more important, and before the scheme was finalised, they would have to be looked at to see if some better arrangement could be made to get residents to the shops and sea.

With regard to when the road would be constructed, Mr. Thwaite said they had put various bids forward to the Ministry of Transport, the latest having been for the 1969 programme, but this had been one of many others from all over Hampshire and "We just don't know what is going to happen." In fact they had rather less than one major road construction a year.

They were hoping this year to get the Hurn spur—the new Bournemouth/Ringwood road — which would cost about £1¾-millions, and there was also a bypass planned in the north of the County, so it might well be in the 1970's before the road was built.

The advent of 40 m.p.h. speed limits had meant that such limits were in many cases accepted where lower limits had previously been refused. For this reason Mr Thwaite said he would not be surprised if a 40 m.p.h. limit was granted for the road—they would be upset if they did not get that limit because there would be quite an amount of turning traffic on what was a very short road.

After questions had been invited, Coun. P. Dobson said they would have a situation where the village was divided, with a vast built up area on one side and the shopping area on the other. He would say that 70% of the population would have to cross the relief road. There would therefore be a greater flow of traffic crossing the road than on the Christchurch by-pass.

Mr. Wise commented that when the road was constructed it would not convey additional traffic, or create traffic—they were intending to split existing traffic two ways by providing an alternative route. He agreed that the form of the junctions was perhaps the most important point they had to consider. They could be staggered (the "hambone" design) or there could be flyovers or roundabouts. Fly-overs were very rare because they were so expensive, so the choice lay between some form of staggered junctions or roundabouts.

Mr. Thwaite commented that he thought it quite likely the design of the central (Gordon Road) junction would have to be looked at again. Possibly the answer would be a roundabout, although they did have certain disadvantages, but perhaps less than the "hambone" design at present envisaged.

Mr. Dix said he took it that there would be shopping areas incorporated in development to the north of Lymington Road, and if this was so, in due course the area between Lymington Road and the sea, so far as shopping was concerned, would become a "dead" area.

Mr. Wise replied that it was right that the major development was taking place to the north of the village, but there would not be very much in the way of shops, there residents in that area would still have to look to the centre for their shopping facilities.

Mr. H. Brice-Baker was told in reply to a question put by him that where the relief road re-joined Lymington Road to the west, the existing road would be widened on the south (golf course) side.

To further questions about the possibilities of fly-overs. Mr. Thwaite reminded members that the point of the relief road was to distribute traffic. If there were fly-overs then those roads would not connect with it, whereas the relief road was meant to be used laterally. But he added that they would certainly look into the question of an under-pass or fly-over at the Gordon Road junction.

Replying to a question on cost, Mr. Thwaite said that speaking "right off the cuff," he thought they had put in a bid to the Ministry of £180,000, but it would probably be £¼-million by the time it was finished. Mr. Wise added that 75% would come from Government funds and 25% from the County.

The final question of the evening came from Mr. J. C. Davidson, who remarked that he appreciated that the County Council were responsible for the whole of the County and similarly Christchurch Council for the whole of the Borough, and that there was therefore little those authorities could do to expedite the construction of the road.

But, he asked, was there anything the Citizens could do, so that they could forget about the 1970's and have the road within two to three years?

The final audible answer of the evening, from the back of the hall, was--- "Have a whip-round!"