

My name is Shan Oakes and I speak on behalf of the local Green Party.

We are deeply concerned about the strong emphasis on building a relief road, as reflected in the headings in various reports and minutes of meetings.

In the minutes drafted for the November meeting, other options are referred to as merely "complementary" to such a relief road or bypass.

That implies that a decision has already been taken, whether tacit or otherwise, that a sophisticated package of other options will not be tested as a matter of urgency, to discover what those could achieve. Indeed, they should have been put to the test many months if not years ago.

What our government sees as a public health emergency, arising from toxic air pollution, has long demanded urgent action but that hasn't been taken.

No-one disputes the fact that the so-called relief road, would provide a new east-west corridor for the A59.

No-one disputes the fact, that only a small proportion of traffic congestion, is caused by vehicles attempting to use that corridor.

A new road would suck more traffic off the A1 motorway.

It would only take a small proportion of that additional traffic, to make far worse, the existing congestion.

We, suggest therefore, that the proposed road be identified as a "suction road" unless some other well-established concept is used by the Department of Transport, which has the same meaning.

So as not to mislead the public, we must make an urgent call for NYCC to refer in future not to plans for a relief road but to something like:-

'An Examination of All Approaches to Solving Traffic Congestion & Air Pollution in Harrogate & Knaresborough'.

We also urge NYCC to adapt related concepts such as changing the Relief Road Review Engagement Group to the Traffic Congestion and Pollution Engagement Group.

Urgent steps should have been taken years ago, to find less destructive ways of reducing congestion and air pollution.

Knaresborough has one AQMA with another soon to be designated but nothing has been done to help the public reduce the problem.

Signs have not been displayed within the AQMA., outside schools and either side of the level crossing in Starbeck, to turn off car engines when stopped for more than a very short time.

Platforms either side of the level crossing have not been constructed, to lessen the time vehicles are stopped on the A59.

Nothing has been done to co-ordinate traffic lights and pedestrian crossings on the A59.

No information has been provided on simple things which we can all do, such as not to depress accelerators before starting and restarting engines.

We ask for an assurance that all necessary steps will be taken, to test a wide range of measures, before continuing with plans to destroy the character of the area with a relief road, bypass or suction road.

The consultant company Mouchel, has a £40,000,000 contract with NYCC to pursue this and other plans. In order to move forward with a neutral perspective, we ask for an assurance to be recorded in the minutes of this meeting, that Mouchel does not have close ties with, or financial interests in, road-building companies.

Lastly, we ask for an assurance that in future, the language used in reports and minutes of meetings, will be clear, concise and effortless to read and understand. For example, in the minutes drafted for the November meeting, it is stated that there will be opportunities for the public "to identify whatever decision is made". What that means is unclear. In terms of avoidable jargon and air pollution, HBC refers to "residential receptors" when it means residential properties.

We feel sure this last request would be welcomed by councillors, as the volume of reading material presented to them, must be overwhelming.