

By: Head of Transport Management

To: Dover Joint Transportation Committee – 19 March 2001

Subject: EAST KENT ACCESS

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary This report gives details of the progress of the East Kent Access initiative.

FOR INFORMATION

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## **Introduction**

1. East Kent Access is the major initiative to complete the improvement of the transport infrastructure in East Kent to assist the economic regeneration of the area. It is one of the two major schemes (Fastrack being the other) identified in the 2001/02 to 2005/06 Local Transport Plan (LTP).
2. The scheme is divided into three phases as shown on Fig 1 attached. Phase 1 is the A256 between the Richborough power station site and Sandwich Bypass and includes a new Access Road to Sandwich. Phase 2 deals with the remaining section of A256 northwards to Lord of the Manor junction and Phase 3 is the remaining section of unimproved Thanet Way between Mount Pleasant roundabout and Lord of the Manor.
3. The purpose of this Report is to inform Members of the progress on the scheme.

## **Phase 1**

4. In July 1999 and March 2000, the County Council's Transport Operations Board approved proposals for the improvement of the A256 between the Ebbsfleet Lane junction and a roundabout on Sandwich Bypass recently constructed by Pfizer. The proposal is for an on-line dual carriageway improvement which will give general traffic improvements and physically restrict development frontage access to safer left-in/left-out movements. The nearside or offside lanes would be used in peak periods for exclusive use by public transport and high occupancy vehicles and detailed consideration is being given to how this would operate. This will bring benefits to all road users while giving particular encouragement to public transport and car sharing in peak periods and compatibility with Pfizer's travel plan initiative. These elements are known as Phase 1B and 1C.
5. Phase 1 includes the concept of a new single carriageway access road to Sandwich between the new Pfizer roundabout on Sandwich Bypass and Ramsgate Road. This section, Phase 1A, does not currently have formal scheme approval. Access to Sandwich from the north is along Ramsgate Road which passes through the Pfizer

complex. Phase 1A will provide improved access to Sandwich Industrial Estate and Sandwich from the west and reduce the risk of unnecessary through traffic passing through Sandwich. Aesthetically, the link would also be a more appropriate route into historic Sandwich and does give scope for future consideration of access strategies including parking and walking. In addition, Pfizer has rapidly expanded over recent years and there are increasing safety concerns associated with road traffic along Ramsgate road and the large number of Pfizer staff and vehicular crossing movements. Proposals for a lower speed limit and pedestrian crossing measures are already being progressed but the option of a route clear of the complex is the ideal solution.

6. The outline proposals for the Access Road, are shown on Drawing No. 10017/1A/3 on display.

7. Sandwich Town Council are concerned about the Access Road proposals and are yet to be convinced about the merits of the scheme. Underlying this is the concern that Ramsgate Road through Pfizer may subsequently be closed to traffic. This is not part of the current proposals. Nevertheless, there would be significant benefits to Pfizer in terms of safety, security and more efficient site operation resulting from closure, so this is a matter primarily for them to consider following implementation of the Access Road. If they wished to promote such a proposal this would come forward in association with a planning application and would need to be considered in the usual way and on its merits at the time. In addition, Sandwich Town Council have raised a number of local transport issues. In particular, the operation of the Ash roundabout on Sandwich Bypass in the morning peak period is a particular concern. This and the other issues will be investigated in conjunction with Dover District Council and Pfizer.

8. Phase 1 has received Provisional Acceptance, subject to statutory procedures, in the LTP Settlement Decision Letter received in December 2000. This includes the Access Road and hence it is now appropriate to formally recommend an outline scheme for approval and to prepare a planning application. The concept is already recorded in the 'Dover District Local Plan Draft Incorporating Proposed Modification August 2000'.

### **Phases 2 and 3**

9. The LTP describes our intention to progress Phase 2 and Phase 3 separately as more clarity about the development plans for London Manston is required to progress Phase 3. However, there is considerable local pressure to progress both phases together now. This is understandable when Cliffs End residents along the A253 had reasonable expectations that this would progress as the last phase of the Thanet Way improvements. We have, therefore, responded to this in evolving options. There are, however, many constraints on both the A253 and A256 which affect identification of options.

10. The A253 has a longstanding approved alignment for a dual carriageway improvement that is generally on-line but at Cliffs End it passes around the northern edge of the houses within the curtilage of the airport. This had significant local support but was proposed at a time when Manston was in MOD ownership with limited aviation use. Since then, it has been acquired by the Wiggins Group with proposals for development as a International airport. This will have major benefits to the economy of the area but Civil Aviation Authority flying safety protection zones prejudice this approved alignment.

11. Although the current scheme is for a dual carriageway, existing traffic flows are 16,000 vehicles a day and could be catered for by a single carriageway. This would be more appropriate but any meaningful improvement of the existing road would involve

significant blight and property demolition as there is frontage property along both sides of the road.

12. On the A256, the situation is equally difficult. Along the west side of the road there is Cliffs End with continuous frontage property. On the other side there is an area of open space but in particular Pegwell Bay abuts the existing road and this has a host of National and European statutory environmental designations. Adjacent to Pegwell Bay foreshore is the redundant Hoverport site and although not statutorily protected there is strong environmental interest in this area as well.

13. The existing traffic flows on the A256 are 23,000 vehicles a day and an improvement similar to Phase 1 based on a dual carriageway would be appropriate. Physically this would be achievable for a route within Pegwell Bay but a lesser standard single carriageway is probably all that could be achieved for an on-line improvement because of the impact of a dual carriageway. Even with this lower standard, encroachment into Pegwell Bay and the open space would still be necessary unless significant property demolition was to be tolerated.

14. Ebbsfleet Lane and Thorne Hill take some A253 west to A256 south traffic and this will need to be maintained because of the constraints on improving the A253 and A256. Roundabouts at the junction with the A253 and A256 are envisaged together with an improved junction at the crossroads with Grinsell Hill/Cottingham Road. The improvements would make the route safer and ease turning movements without excessively encouraging extra use of the route.

15. These options based around using the existing A253 and A256 corridors are described as Concept 1 and are shown in Fig 2 attached.

16. An alternative, predominantly off-line option, known as Concept 2 is shown in Fig 3 attached. This replaces the existing A253 and A256 with a new route that takes advantage of a modest gap in the middle of Cliffs End where Foads Lane crosses the railway line. This new combined route would be taken through this gap with the existing A253 and A256 through Cliffs End reverting to local access and bus routes. Connections from this new link to the A253 and A256 would be provided on the general corridor of Ebbsfleet Lane and Thorne Hill. Such a route would overcome the constraints imposed by property and Pegwell Bay and avoid the need for property demolition and remove community severance. Such a route would be intrusive to residents in the middle of Cliffs End and along Ebbsfleet Lane and Thorne Hill. It would intrude into the local landscape and affect farm land and involve expensive railway crossings.

17. The new middle link and connection from the A256 would need to be a dual carriageway with a single carriageway being adequate to connect back to the A253.

18. With both concepts, an improvement of the Lord of the Manor junction is required at this critical 'crossroads' junction between the A253 and A256. With Concept 1 the creation of a two bridge gyratory system is envisaged to replace the present 'dumbbell' layout. With Concept 2, an enlarged southern roundabout is envisaged but retaining the basic 'dumb-bell' layout. The objective of improvement is to remove congestion at this critical junction and to assist public transport as well as helping cyclists and pedestrians to move around the junction.

19. Also with both concepts, it is envisaged that the A253 between Mount Pleasant and Thorne Hill would be improved on line to a modern rural carriageway standard with normal carriageway width, edge strips and verges.



## Public Consultation

20. Public consultation normally involves seeking views on a few viable options. In this case, some of the options involving property, farmland and important environmental areas are probably not practical but are needed as options so that we can demonstrate the issues, difficulties and implications of evolving a preferred scheme.

21. It will be particularly difficult for people whose homes are shown as affected and environmental organisations will be similarly concerned but we must promote a dialogue with the local community and organisations to draw out all the issues and see if there is a consensus on the way forward.

22. To summarise, the consultation options are:

	<u>Drawing No.</u>
<u>Concept 1</u>	) 100017/45
A256 Option A Through Pegwell Bay & Hoverport (Dual 2 lane c/w)	)
A256 Option B On-line affecting Pegwell Bay and open space (Wide single c/w)	) 100017/48
A256 Option C On-line taking property (Wide single c/w)	)
A253 Option X Improvement north side taking property (Single c/w)	)
A253 Option Y Improvement south side taking property (Single c/w)	) 10017/49
A253 Option Z Do-minimum improvements (Single c/w)	)
Ebbsfleet Lane/Thorne Hill Improvements	) 100017/45
Lord of the Manor gyratory	)
<u>Concept 2</u>	) 100017/46
Middle Section (Dual 2 lane c/w)	)
Link from A256 (Dual 2 lane c/w)	) 100017/47
Link from A253 (Single c/w)	)
Lord of the Manor junction	)

23. Public consultation will involve a display in Cliffs End village hall on Friday and Saturday 23 and 24 March at which officers will discuss the options and the public will be invited to complete questionnaires. District Council, local and appropriate national organisations will be invited to comment.

## Financial Implications

24. The cost of progressing East Kent Access and the public consultation is within current budget allocations. Phase 1 has been Provisionally Accepted by Government. Further phases would be the subject of further bids in the LPT process.

**Recommendation**

25. This report is for Members information.

**Contact Officer**

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*Background Documents*

*Drawing No's 100017/1A/3 and 10017/45-100017/49 on display.*

*Figures 1-3 attached*

**Appendix 2 – East Kent Access**

**Evaluation of Concept 1 and Concept 2 of Phase 2 and Phase 3 against Policy TR5 of The Dover District Draft Local Plan**

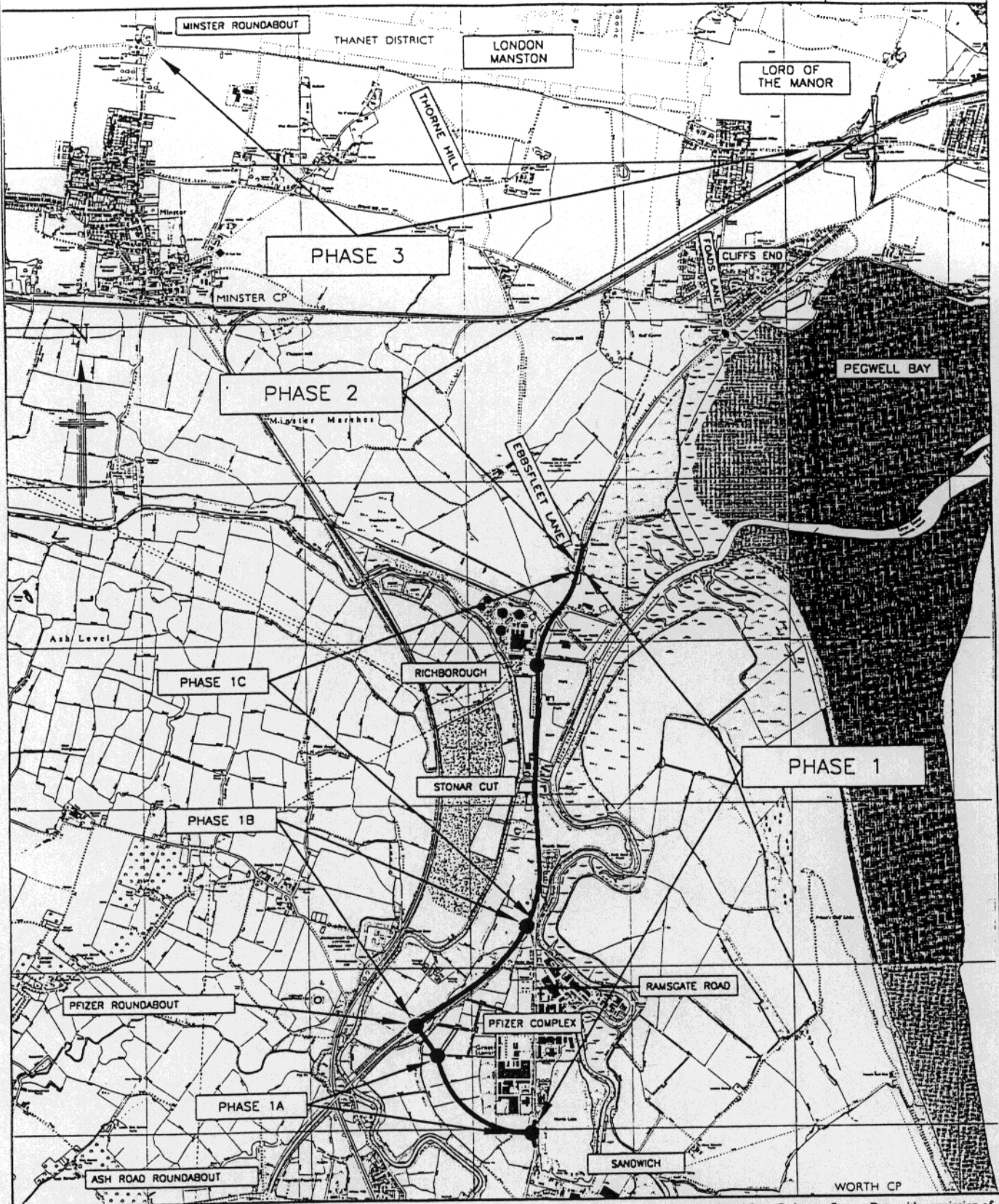
<b>Criteria – Policy TR5</b>	<b>Concept 1</b>	<b>Concept 2</b>	<b>Comments</b>
They represent the best environmental option.			No other realistic options exist for improvement to the route corridors in question.
The alignment minimises, and wherever possible avoids, visual and noise intrusion, severance and the demolition of property.	The proposals for concept 1 will result in significant demolition of existing property and results in severance. Noise and traffic pollution will be maintained. Constraints are likely to result in restricted improvement, ie. single C/way on part of the A256	Avoids demolition of property and severance. Provides benefits to existing properties by reduction in noise and traffic pollution. Facilitates dual c/way standard improvement	
The detailed design minimises visual harm and the loss of habitat.	Visual harm can be dealt with as part of the design process. Will inevitably affect habitats. Will affect areas subject to National and European Nature Designations.	Visual harm and loss of habitat will be minimised. Opportunities for substantial landscaping. Overcomes proximity to areas subject to National and European Nature Designations.	
Provision is made for cyclists and pedestrians.	Will enable improvements to existing facilities to be undertaken	Enables "bypassed" roads to be used for local traffic. Will provide opportunities for improvements to be made.	Further investigations should be undertaken to examine the opportunities for enhanced cycle and public transport facilities within the Concept 2 proposals
In the case of non-strategic routes, need can be demonstrated.	n/a	n/a	Not relevant. The need has been established by virtue of the status of the routes forming part of the primary network.
They improve road safety	Will result in improvements	Will result in improvements both in the context of the proposed scheme and with the "bypassed" roads.	

Conclusion: On the basis of this analysis, the advantages of Concept 2 outweigh Concept 1.



# EAST KENT ACCESS - PHASE DETAILS

Figure 1



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Figure No. 1

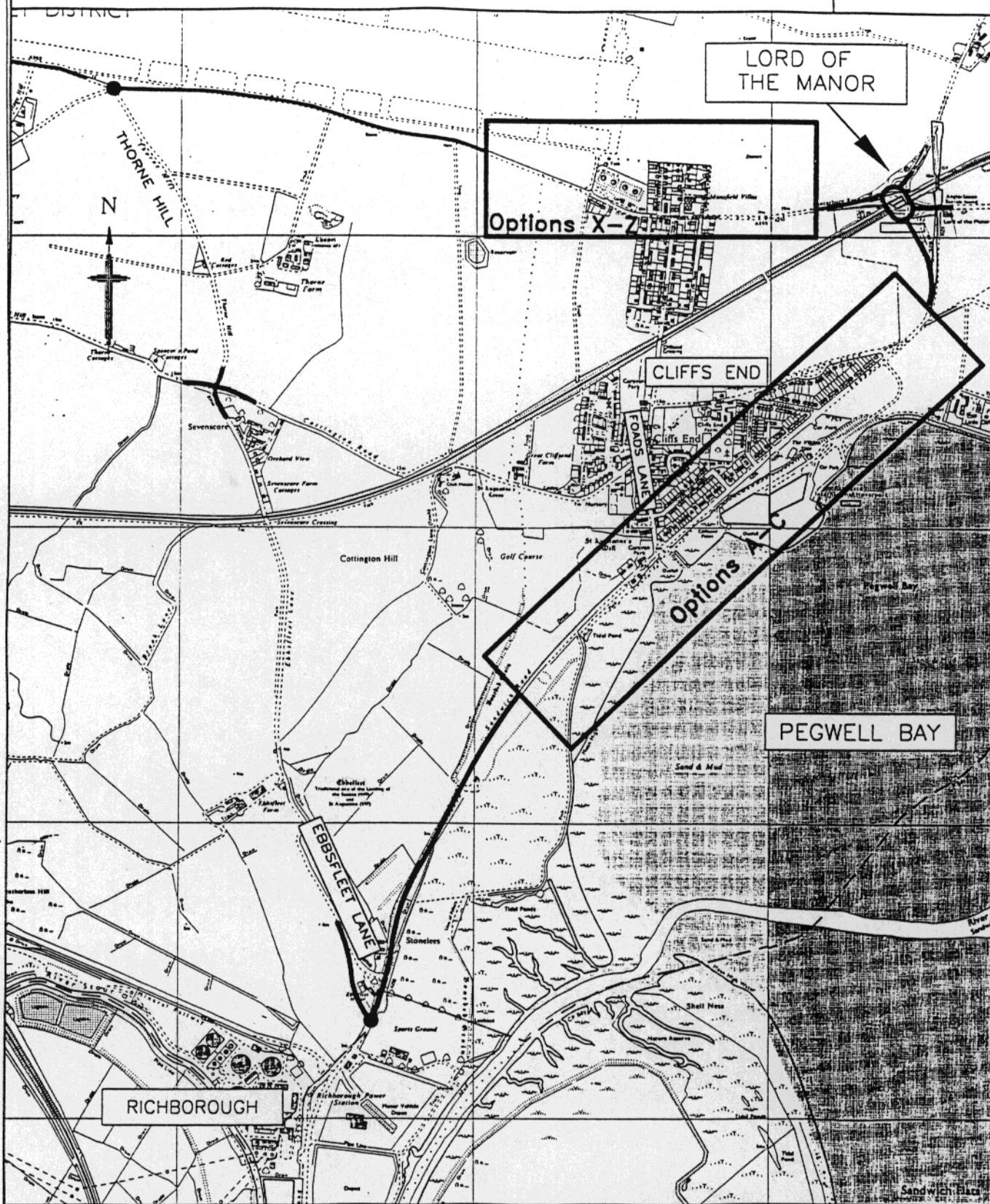
Agenda Item No.

Date of Meeting: 9/03/01



Dover Joint Transportation  
Committee

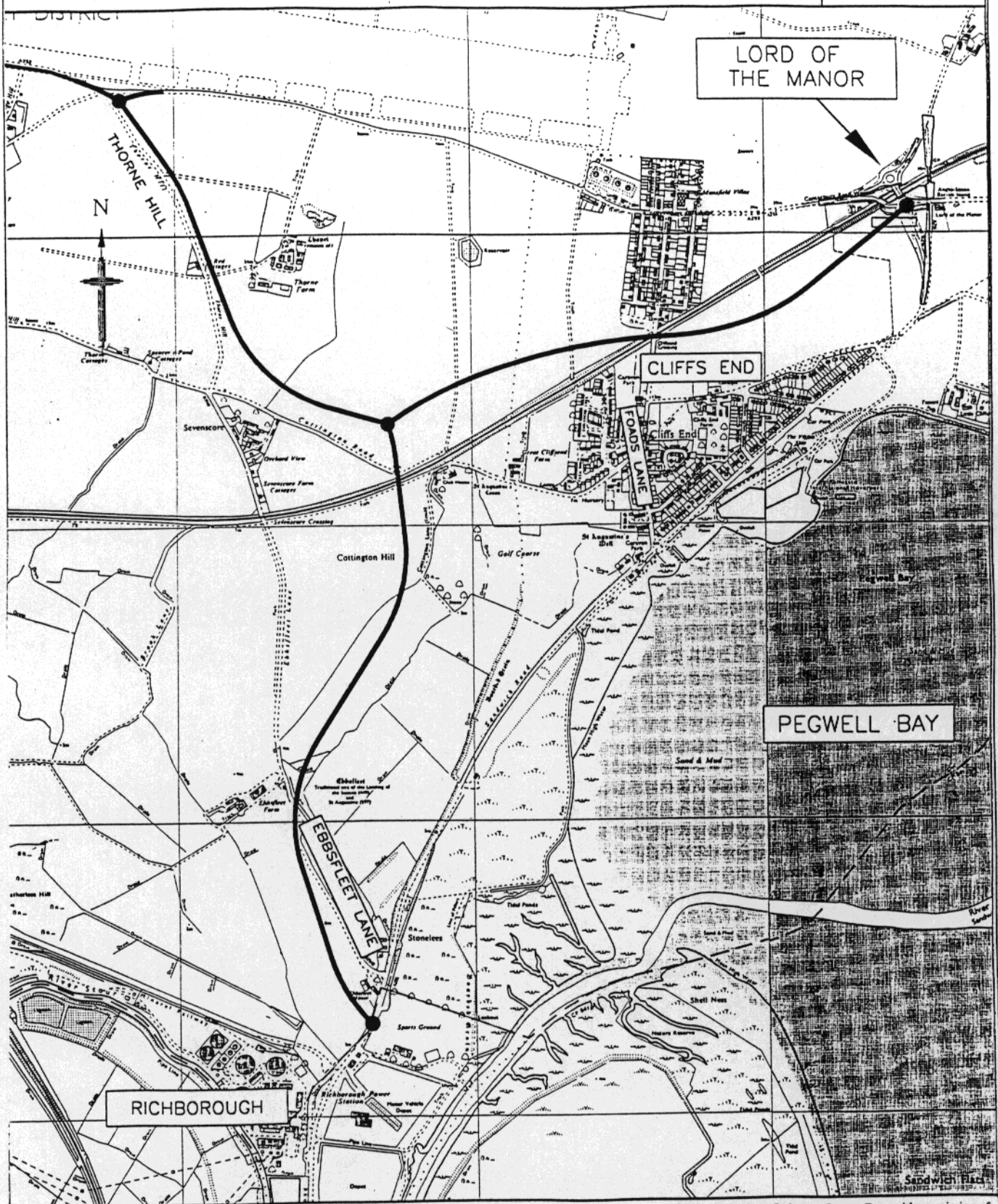




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Figure No. 2





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Figure No. 3