

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

23 MAY 2012

A684 BEDALE AISKEW LEEMING BAR BYPASS NON MOTORISED USERS PROVISION

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is seeking the views of the Local Access Forum on proposed modifications to the Non Motorised User Facilities in respect of the A684 Bedale Aiskew Leeming Bar Bypass (BALB) scheme.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The BALB proposals were subject to extensive public consultation in 2009 which included the distribution of leaflets and questionnaires to all households and businesses in Bedale Aiskew and Leeming Bar, exhibitions and engagement with landowners and stakeholders. The exhibitions provided the opportunity to discuss the NMU proposals with interested groups and individuals and meetings were held with representatives of the British Horse Society (BHS) and the Police.
- 2.2 The Planning application for the BALB scheme was subsequently submitted in March 2010.
- 2.3 NYCC Officers attended a meeting of the North Yorkshire Local Access Forum LAF on 19 August 2010. A copy of the minute from the meeting is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. The LAF resolved that:

The Chairman to write to the County Council recommending the installation of a traffic light crossing point at Low Street as part of the Bedale Bypass and if such a crossing is not initially installed then for ducting for a Pegasus crossing be installed as part of the initial build.

- 2.4 In drawing up the NMU proposals consideration had been given to alternative arrangements to provide an equestrian crossing of the bypass in the vicinity of Leases Road or Low Street. However both the County Council's Highway Authority and the Police were not supportive of the provision of a signalised crossing of the bypass. The reasons for not being supportive were 2 fold:-
- a) firstly, the Highway Authority and the Police have significant concerns over safety and are therefore not supportive of traffic signals on derestricted roads i.e. those section of roads subject to the national speed limit; and

- b) secondly, because of the potential very low usage of the crossing, drivers would become accustomed to driving through unhindered and there is a risk, under these conditions, that on the odd occasion the lights may be set on red for the drivers they may unconsciously not notice the lights and drive through at speed.

The proposals therefore included for an at grade crossing of the bypass in the vicinity of Low Street with corrals but no PEGASUS crossing. Additionally, a route for equestrians to avoid crossing the road at grade was proposed. This alternative included tracks running both sides of the bypass adjacent to the highway boundary, then utilising the bridge over the railway to cross under the bypass adjacent to the Wensleydale railway line. It was acknowledged that this was a significant diversion but did provide a safer alternative. Having provided this diversion facility a further enhancement was included to continue the track over the railway line to the A684 east of Leeming Bar. NMU routes were also provided to connect Low Street and Leases Road on the south side of the bypass to link into the equestrian facilities provided by the Highways Agency to cross under the A1(M) motorway at Leeming junction. Plan 1 provides details of the proposals at that time.

- 2.5 Following submission of the planning application there was a change in government and the DfT withdrew the Programme Entry status for the scheme and informed all authorities that they should not raise expectations of any scheme obtaining funding. Whilst consultation on the planning application was concluded, the scheme was never submitted to the Planning and Regulatory Functions Committee for determination of the planning application as this could have been seen as raising public expectation of the scheme progressing.
- 2.6 In January 2012, following submission of a further bid for funding, the DfT reinstated Programme Entry for the scheme with a start of construction in autumn 2014. During the interim period since the submission of the planning application in 2010, the Highways Agency has opened the A1(M) upgrade scheme including the link road from the Leeming Junction to Leases Road. In 2010, when the BALB planning application was submitted it was the view of the NYCC officers and the Police that the speed on the link road between the Leeming Junction and Leases Road would be high and the road subject to a National speed limit. However observations have indicated that this is not the case and the 85 percentile speed is nearer 40 mph. In light of these observations a review has been carried out of the NMU provision to try and address the views expressed by the LAF and the BHS. Consultation has been carried out with the Police and they have confirmed that they would have no objection to the introduction of a speed limit and signalised PEGASUS crossing on the section of the bypass between the Leeming Junction and Leases Road.

2.7 Plans 2A and 2B attached sets out a modified proposal for the NMU for the LAF consideration and comment. Locating a PEGASUS crossing between the Leeming A1(M) junction and Leases Road provides the most direct route for equestrians from Back Lane Aiskew to Leases Road and Low Street and also provides the most direct link for the National Cycle Network Route 71 which also connects Back Lane to Low Street. The proposal also includes off road NMU provision connecting the proposed crossing of the bypass with Low Street and Leases Road south of the bypass. Provision of the signalised crossing of the bypass in the form of a PEGASUS crossing will negate the need to provide the long diversion for equestrians to cross under the bypass next to the Wensleydale railway and this route, along with the extension to the A684 would be deleted under this proposal.

2.8 The LAF are requested to support the modified proposals as set out in Plans 2A and 2B.

3.0 WAY FORWARD

3.1 A meeting has been arranged with representatives of the BHS to discuss the proposed modifications. The outcome of these discussions will be reported verbally at your meeting. It is proposed that with the support of the LAF and the BHS that the Planning Application be modified to reflect the revised NMU proposals as shown on Plans 2A and sB.

4.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Consideration has been given to the potential for any equality impacts arising from the proposed modifications to the MNU facilities. It is the view of officers that the changes do not have any adverse impact on any of the protected characteristics identified in the Equalities Act 2010. The modifications will enhance the provision for all users crossing the bypass including people with disabilities.

5.0 FINANCE

5.1 There are no adverse financial implications with the proposed modifications and it is anticipated that if accepted there should be an overall net saving in the scheme costs.

6.0 DECISION

6.1 Members of the LAF are requested to support the proposed modification to the NMU proposals for BALB as set out in Plan 2As and 2B.

Contact:
Elwyn Williams
Acting Head of Network Strategy
T: 01609 532269

Minute NYCC Local Access Forum 19 August 2010

71. BEDALE & LEEMING BYPASS

The Forum received a presentation from Elwyn Williams explaining in detail the main elements of the proposed scheme with particular emphasis on the provision for non motorised users. Large scale coloured plans were circulated at the meeting and a copy placed in the Minute Book.

The Chairman asked if it was practical for non-motorised users to cross the road at Low Street and whether a 2km diversion to avoid crossing the road at Low Street was reasonable. Elwyn Williams replied that the volume of traffic predicted to be using the bypass in 2026 was similar to that using the A684 which was currently crossed by equestrians. He added that visibility at the crossing points on the bypass met current guidelines. A survey of the number of equestrians using the crossing had been carried out and the maximum number recorded was five. He maintained that across the county there were lots of similar crossings in use all of which operated without any difficulty. The Chairman whilst acknowledging the response given, asked if the County Council should be more forward looking by not creating a precedent that encouraged non-motorised users to cross a busy road.

Rachel Connolly said that she was very disappointed that the crossing at the end of Low Street was not to be controlled by traffic lights that incorporated intelligent technology. She suggested the reason for this was that North Yorkshire Police had indicated that they were not in favour of traffic signals being installed on a road with a speed limit that was in excess of 40mph. She said that North Yorkshire was the only police authority in the country to adopt such a stance and that in so doing they would deny non-motorised users the option of having a safe crossing point. She maintained that there was no evidence to support the views expressed by North Yorkshire Police and she believed that the County Council therefore needed to justify its decision. A diversion of 2km which included using a tunnel that was used by trains was not in her opinion safe.

Rachel Connolly said that traffic sensitive lights were in use at many locations around country all of which had reported no accidents. The crossing at the end of Low Street would not be used exclusively by equestrians and she suggested that approximately 200 journeys a week would benefit from traffic lights being installed. Elwyn Williams replied that the County Council had given close consideration to the installation of traffic lights. He referred to the installation on the A66 which had to be removed on account of the issues it caused drivers. Rachel Connolly maintained that its removal was due to it being incorrectly installed. Elwyn Williams said that furthermore discussions with Officers from road safety had revealed further concerns namely that as use of the crossing would be infrequent, motorists who regularly used the route would get used to driving through the crossing and would not expect to see a red light. He acknowledged that traffic levels would differ at different times of the day – and said that he did not expect non-motorised users to cross during peak times.

In response to questions from Martin Wiles about consultation, Elwyn Williams confirmed that user groups had been consulted including the British Horse Society. The British Horse Society had responded to the consultation stating their concerns in a letter which was almost word for word the same as that received from Rachel Connolly. The same response had been sent to the British Horse Society as that sent to the Chairman of the LAF in response to Mrs Connolly's letter. No further communication had been received from the British Horse Society since sending the letter. Martin Wiles added that he did not share the view put forward by road safety officers, he believed road users should drive in accordance with the road circumstances.

The Chairman said that the issue around the use of traffic lights was a red-herring. The point was that the Bypass favoured motorised users and that ideally the crossing at Low Street should be via a bridge.

Elwyn Williams stressed the importance of balancing the needs of users against the cost of provision. A bridge over the Bypass would cost approximately £1M for in essence what would be low usage. He said that given the circumstances it would not be reasonable to invest such a large sum and that it was not possible to justify construction of a bridge. The total cost of the scheme was approximately £30M - £1M for a bridge was too high a proportion of that figure. With regard to train usage of the tunnel to be shared with non-motorised users he said that current usage was between 4-8 trains per annum some of which used the tunnel during the night. In these circumstances he did not think it was unreasonable for non-motorised users to share use of the tunnel. The dimensions of the tunnel and visibility meant that it would be almost impossible for a non-motorised user to get caught unaware by a train. If this situation were to change the position would be reviewed.

County Councillor John Fort said that Members should not forget that there was overwhelming local support for the Bypass which in any event he did not think would proceed on account of anticipated government announcements in October about cuts in funding.

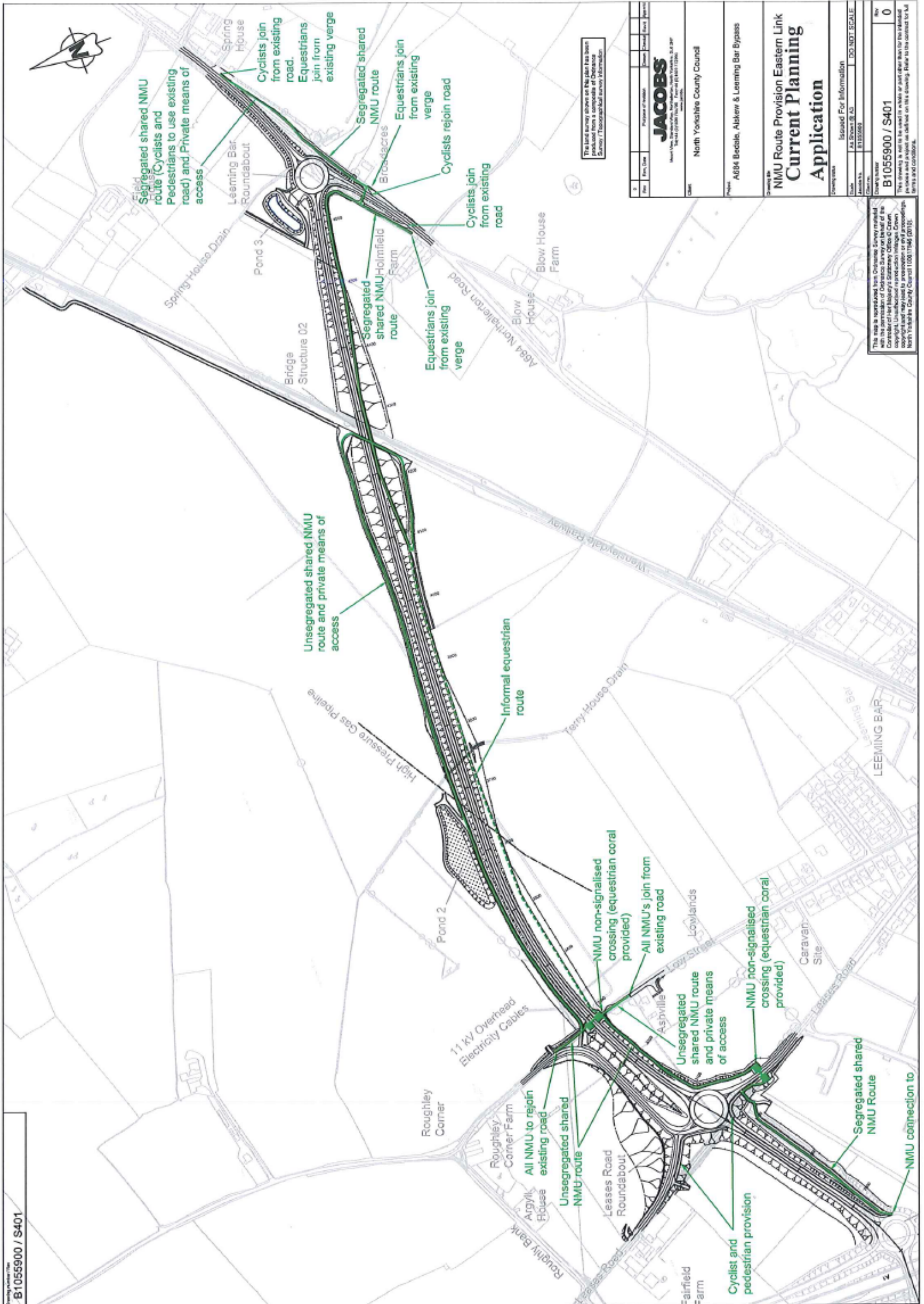
David Gibson suggested that provision of a Pegasus crossing at a cost of around £70K would do away with the need to provide a diversion route thus saving money. Elwyn Williams replied that this was true but that it would not enhance the PROW network on the northern side of the bypass.

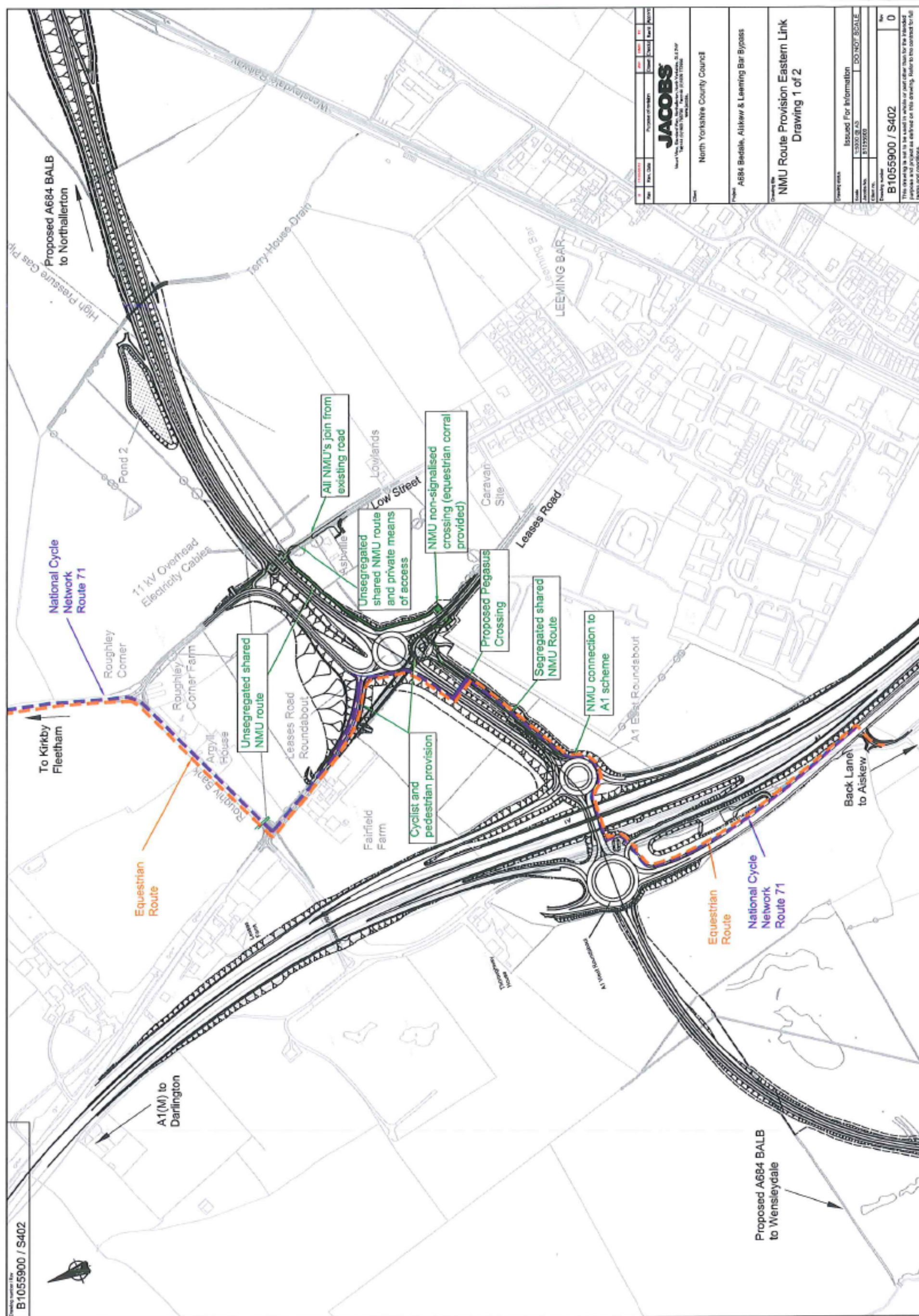
Honor Byford said that it would be possible to install ducting for a Pegasus crossing as part of the initial construction which could then be utilised if ever the situation changed in the future. Members supported this suggestion in the event that traffic levels increased to such a level that safety became an issue. Forum Members agreed to recommend the installation of ducting to the County Council as a fall back position if a crossing controlled by traffic lights was not initially installed.

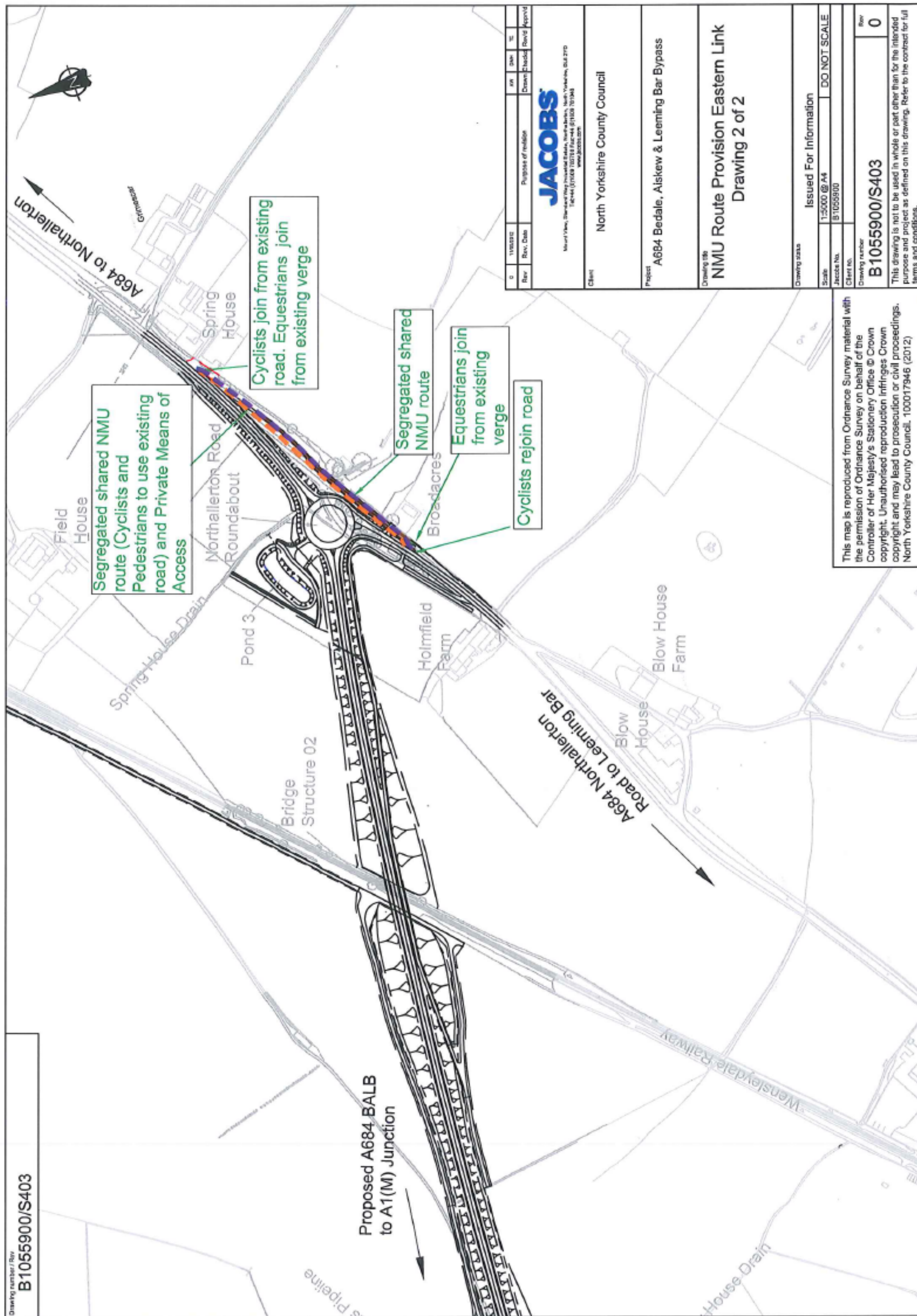
Forum Members agreed that the County Council had demonstrated that it had properly consulted stakeholders.

The Chairman thanked the presenters for their attendance and for the information they had provided.

NYCC Local Access Forum – Minutes of 19 August 2010/5







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