

A19 Billingham Bypass -
The case for resurfacing the
concrete surface with whisper asphalt.

(Proposed final dossier – January 30th, 2010)

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Introduction

The A19 Billingham bypass has a brushed concrete surface. It is well known that surfaces of this type cause considerable road noise. The government has acknowledged that this type of surface are not appropriate, and therefore set out a program to replace all concrete roads by 2011. The position of the Department of Transport was set out in 2003 by Alistair Darling, "*Measures that minimise the effect of traffic on the people who live alongside roads is as important as trying to ensure that people can travel safely and reliably*"

<http://www.highways.gov.uk/aboutus/10895.htm>

As a result of funding issues and the way limited resources were allocated, the A19 problem at Billingham was not addressed, in spite of having a very strong case.

Compensation

During the public inquiry, a program was set out to compensate the residents of Norton, for the environmental damage that would occur once the A19 was constructed and operational. This compensation was intended to help with double glazing etc. An acoustic fence was also installed to help with noise pollution. These measures were taken even though the concrete road section would be well away from Norton, and that the tarmac section would be over 100 metres from the nearest dwelling.

No compensation has ever been given to the residents of **Billingham**, some of who's houses are within 35m of the concrete section of road.

Noise Abatement Fence

As a result of residents concerns and a widely supported petition, a noise abatement fence was installed on the east side of the A19 in 2001. Many residents have stated that the fence has had no impact on noise levels from the A19; many being of the opinion that road noise is worse than ever.

Comments made by one Wolviston Court resident:-

"The erection of the fence a few years ago was a complete waste of time and money and did nothing to reduce the noise levels. It is even worse when the road is wet."

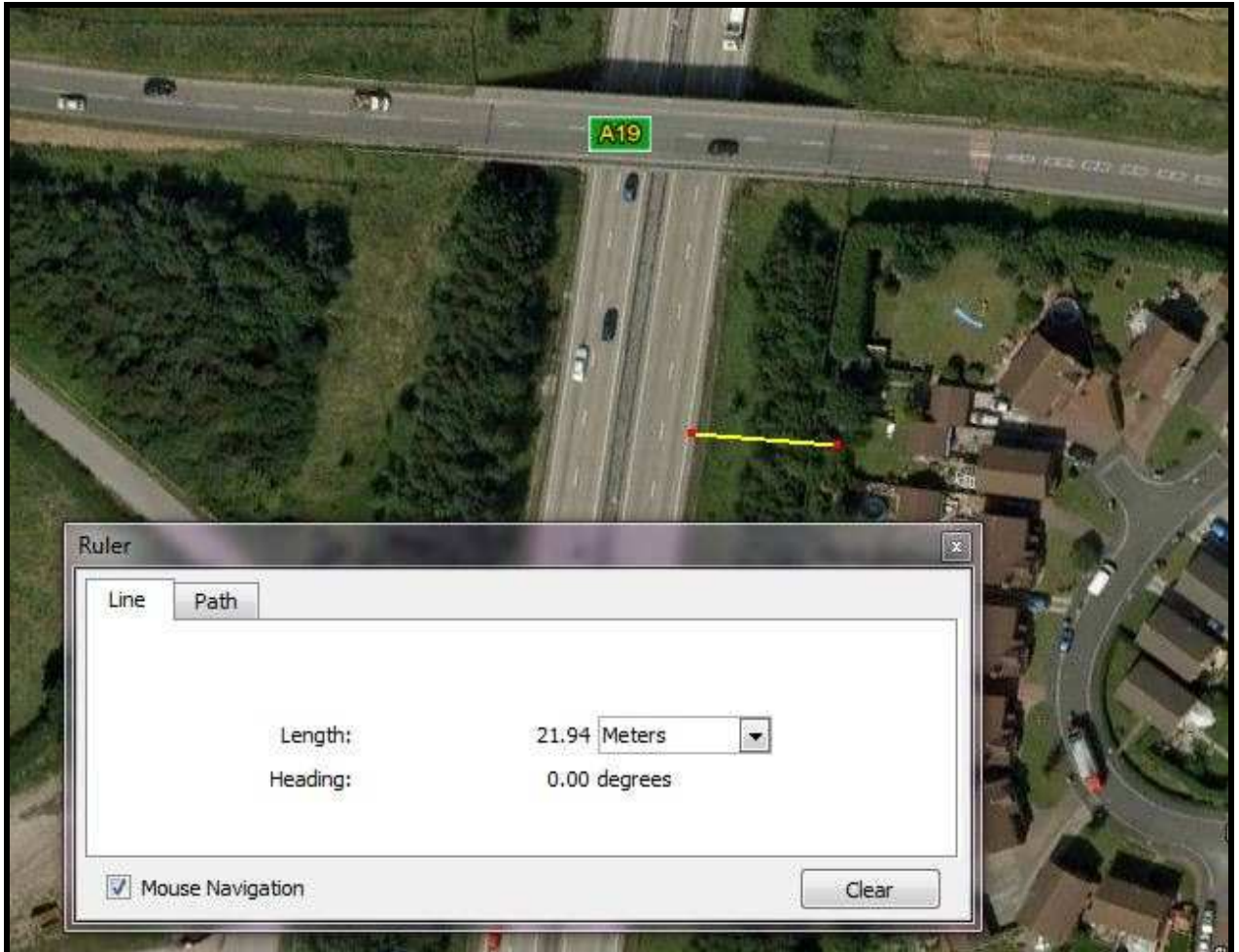
Proximity

The A19 Billingham bypass is located on the west side of Billingham, close the Wolviston Court Estate. Over 400 houses are affected by the road noise, 60 of which back directly onto the road, many of them are as close as 35 metres from the road and some property boundaries are within 25 metres.

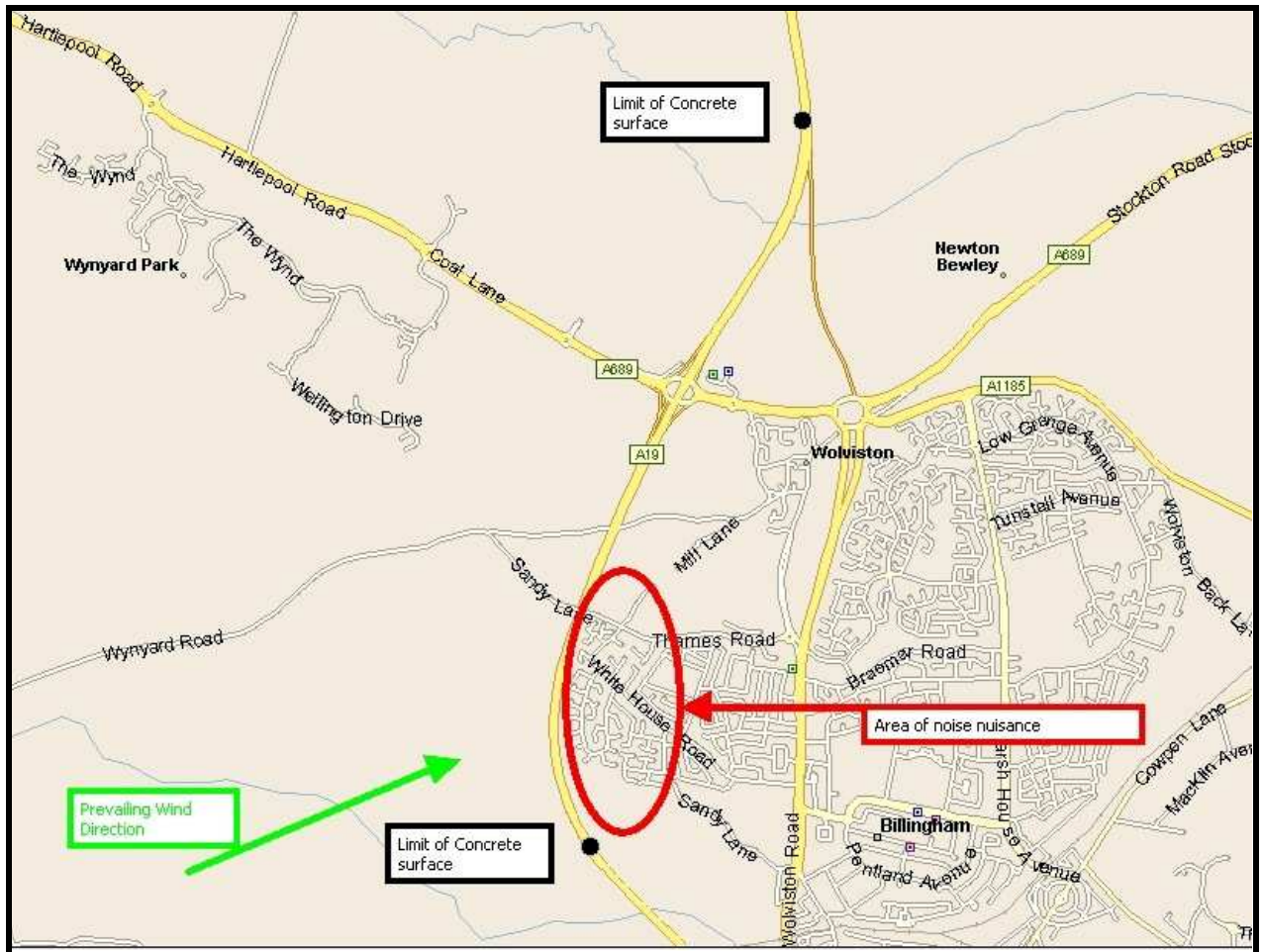
Below is an over view map taken from Google Earth



Below shows the closeness of the A19 to properties in Eden Way. (Source Google Earth)



Weather patterns also work to the detriment of Wolviston Court Estate. The prevailing south westerly wind increases the impact of the road noise. When the wind is blowing from the south west the noise can be easily heard 700 metres from the A19.



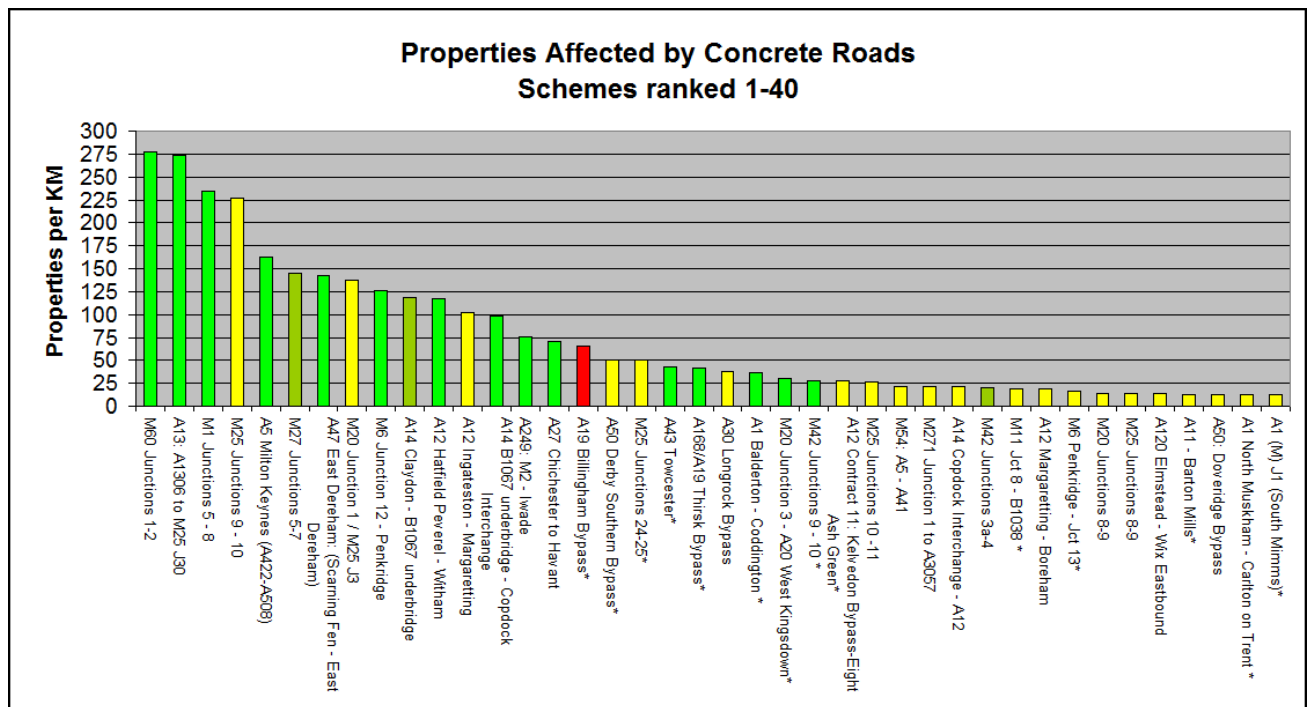
Concrete Road Program/Ranking

2003-2011 Plan for replacing concrete roads

In 2003 Alistair Darling announced a program to replace all concrete roads with quieter surfaces. Of the 75 schemes announced, when comparing properties affected per KM, the A19 Billingham bypass ranked 17th most affected, with 64 properties per km. in that category.

It should be noted that although the concrete section is 4.2km long, only 2km needs to be resurfaced to remove the noise nuisance in Wolviston Court Estate. From information received from the highways agency it would appear a number of schemes have been carried out which had a lower ranking than Billingham.

On the graph below, green indicates schemes completed, dark green schemes indicate planned programs or other noise reducing measures. Yellow indicates schemes not performed or information not available.



Scheme	Length	Properties affected per KM	Status
M60 Junctions 1-2	1.7	277	Done
A13: A1306 to M25 J30	3	273	Done
M1 Junctions 5 - 8	8	234	Done
M25 Junctions 9 - 10	7.8	227	Not done
A5 Milton Keynes (A422-A508)	6.3	163	Done
M27 Junctions 5-7	5.7	145	Proposed
A47 East Dereham: (Scarning Fen - East Dereham)	3.3	142	Done

M20 Junction 1 / M25 J3	1.1	138	Unsure
M6 Junction 12 - Penkridge	5.3	126	Done
A14 Claydon - B1067 underbridge	3	118	Groving to reduce road noise
A12 Hatfield Peverel - Witham	5.2	117	Done
A12 Ingateston - Margaretting	4.4	102	Not done
A14 B1067 underbridge - Copdock Interchange	3.3	98	Done
A249: M2 - Iwade	7.9	76	Done
A27 Chichester to Havant	13.8	70	Done
A19 Billingham Bypass*	4.2	65	Not done
			No information note short section
A50 Derby Southern Bypass*	0.5	51	
M25 Junctions 24-25*	8.5	50	Not done
A43 Towcester*	3.3	43	Done
A168/A19 Thirsk Bypass*	8	41	Done
A30 Longrock Bypass	1.8	38	Not done
A1 Balderton - Coddington *	3	37	Done
M20 Junction 3 - A20 West Kingsdown*	6.6	30	Done
M42 Junctions 9 - 10 *	5.1	28	Done
A12 Contract 11: Kelvedon Bypass-Eight Ash Green*	7.7	28	No information
M25 Junctions 10 -11	9.2	26	Not done
M54: A5 - A41	9.3	22	Not done
M271 Junction 1 to A3057	2.8	22	Proposed
A14 Copdock Interchange - A12	8	21	Not done
M42 Junctions 3a-4	3.5	20	Proposed
M11 Jct 8 - B1038 *	12.1	19	Proposed/partly done
A12 Margaretting - Boreham	13.4	19	Not done

Source Data:- <http://www.highways.gov.uk/aboutus/10895.htm>

Traffic Levels

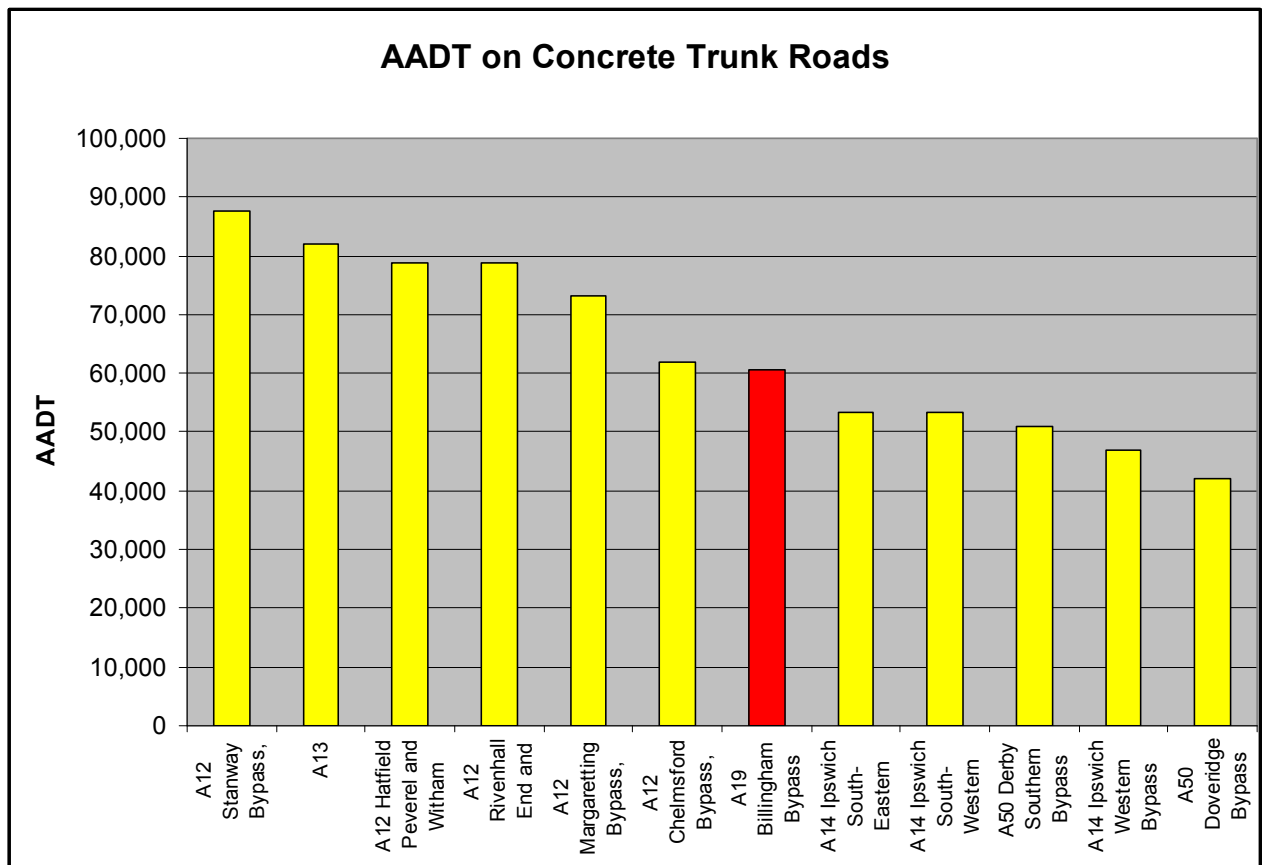
Current Situation

In 2008 64,000 AADT, were recorded by the Highways Agency, Of these movements 15-16% are HGVs. This figure represents an increase in traffic volume of 23% from the 2002 figures. Traffic is increasing at a rate of over 1000 AADT per year.

According to 2005 figures, the A19 trunk road at Billingham was the 7th busiest concrete trunk road in England. (Source data:-

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.dft.gov.uk/press/speechesstatements/statements/hapqcorrection/>.)

Of those ranked higher, none appear to have significant residential areas close to the road. **It is likely therefore, that A19 Billingham bypass is one of, if not the worst case, of the impact of a concrete road on a community.**



A19NAG Excel file:- <http://www.a19nag.com/page14.html>

The Future

If current trends continue, by 2014 over 70,000 AADT are likely to be recorded.

Other developments may further increase traffic volumes:-

The New Tyne Tunnel is due to be opened in the near future. This will make the A19 a major north-south route and further increase traffic.

The Hospital development close to the A19/A689 junction at Wolviston

Noise levels and environmental considerations

Properties are experiencing noise levels of the order of 70dB. (A similar noise level as a vacuum cleaner at 3 metres). A noise survey carried out in 1999 supported these figures. In fact one location recorded noise levels of 75dB (see appendix).

During the coming months it is hoped that a further noise survey will be undertaken by Stockton Borough Council.

International Statements on Noise Levels

The World Health Organisation states that: - Daytime noise levels of less than 55dB are desirable to prevent community annoyance and less than 35dB is recommended to preserve the restorative process of sleep.

The European Union Environment Agency states that: - Noise above a certain volume threshold (from 60 dB) affects not only the well-being, but also the health of citizens.

Endurance

The A19 Billingham bypass was opened in 1982 so there has been a blight on the community of Wolviston Court Estate for over 27 years.

It is expected that the concrete surface could easily remain serviceable for another 15 years before it requires maintenance. With traffic levels likely to increase, the noise nuisance will also follow. With AADT figures increasing at a rate of 1,000 per year, by 2024, 80000 AADT are likely to be recorded.

Impact of the road noise

Property Prices

The constant roar from the A19 surface noise immediately puts prospective buyers off properties which are close to the road. It's difficult to quantify the amount, however buyers will soon look elsewhere once they enter the garden and hear the noise.

This is a comment made by a house buyer in Wolviston Court Estate:-

"My husband and myself looked at a number of properties for sale on Wolviston Court in 2007-2008 (Chilcroft, Lenham, Glenfall Close) and although most of the houses were suitable and some exactly what we wanted we ended up not buying them primarily due to the road noise. They mostly had lovely large gardens as well but still it was the road noise that was the deciding factor for us. Therefore you could say that the noise does have a serious impact on property prices in the area. We have finally bought a house on Thames Road where the noise is significantly less but certainly still audible from our garden."

Sleeping Issues

Due the level of noise from the A19 sleeping has been difficult for a very long time, whenever bedroom windows have been opened to improve ventilation and to achieve restful sleep.

Comments made by one Wolviston Court resident:-

"we moved up to Skripka Drive 4 years ago from Low Grange due to the ever closing proximity of the land fill sites and the busy seal sands road. On our first night in our new house we couldnt sleep because of the noise from the traffic on the A19 - we couldn't believe that the noise from the A19 road is constant 24 hours a day."

Garden Usage

Many of the gardens close the A19 are now no go areas for social activity, as it's very difficult to communicate above the "road roar". It is very difficult even to hear a phone ringing for example.

Comments made by one Wolviston Court resident:-

"Because of the noise from the A19 it is impossible to call up the garden and be heard. Even the bird song is blotted out because of the traffic noise. The erection of the fence a few years ago was a complete waste of time and money and did nothing to reduce the noise levels. It is even worse when the road is wet. We have had no help with double glazing or any other noise reduction schemes and it is high time a much quieter road surface was installed. When we moved here there was no A19 here and we saw and heard kestrels and curlews regularly and all was peace and quiet. Oh for a return of that."

Solution to the Noise Problem

The current road surface is of brushed concrete, shown in the photograph to the right. This is known to be extremely noisy due to excessive friction.

To reduce the noise generated by traffic on the surface, 3 solutions are possible:-

1) Install an acoustic Fence.

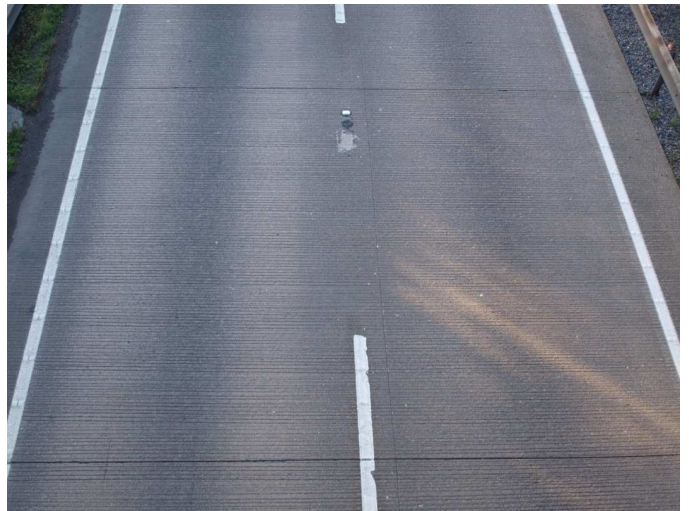
This option has already failed as fences only operate on "line of sight"

2) Reduce traffic speed.

This could have some impact on noise levels.

3) Change the road surface.

This is the best option to reduce traffic noise; installing Whisper Asphalt can reduce tyre noise by up to 9dB.



DEFRA's Noise program

Defra are undertaking noise mapping of the UK for the purpose of identifying areas of noise nuisance. Billingham Bypass has not been identified as first priority location(FPL), however it has been noted as "An important area". This is very surprising given that DEFRA have identified a junction on the A1027 just to the west of our problem as a FPL. Could the noise problem at this location originate from the A19? (See map below)

DEFRA are trying to impose a threshold of 76dB, before action needs to be taken. This does not agree with the threshold of 68dB, mentioned in the 1999 noise survey report.



Petitioning

In response to the government withdrawing funding for the replacement of concrete road surfaces, a petition was carried out to show the residents disapproval, in what they thought had been a promise to remove the noise nuisance. The petition took two forms, a paper petition which attracted 500 signatures, and a web site, a19nag.com was established to publicize and inform residents. An on-line petition attracted 450 signatures. It should be noted that most of those who responded were directly affected by the road noise.

Support for the aim

The following support the aims of A19NAG

Stockton Borough Council

Matthew,

Following you email to Neil Schneider below, I am writing to provide you with the Council's position in relation to your concerns and requests. I also note the content of the email from Bernard McLean in relation to noise issues. As the same recipients were included on both emails, I have taken the liberty of responding in one reply.

Firstly, in terms of your request for the Council support your campaign; the Council does not directly support individual action groups. That said, the Council as both Highway and Environmental Health Authority, does have views on the issues you have raised. In summary, the Council does support the replacement of the concrete carriageway for alternative surfacing that reduces road traffic noise. As you are aware, the A19 is a trunk road, managed and maintained by the Highways Agency. The Council has no jurisdiction on the A19 as a Highway Authority, however the interests and concerns of local Residents is at the heart of the Councils responsibilities.

The history of the replacement of this section of concrete carriageway has been the subject of discussion for many years and it is discussed at regular liaison meetings with the Highways Agency and Autolink. Evidently, the Highways Agency had put a bid into DfT earlier this year to reconstruct this section of road, as there were some surplus unallocated funds at the time. Ultimately, other projects and areas had also bid and therefore they weren't successful that time. The Highways Agency official statement on this issue is 'Concrete surfacing replacement on the A19 Billingham Diversion is not programmed for 2009/10; though there is reasonable justification for funding the scheme in the future.'

As I stated previously, the Council does support the replacement of the carriageway with quieter surfacing, however, it remains the jurisdiction of the HA. The Council will continue to lobby at an Officer and Political level, to ensure that residents concerns are heard.

With regard to the noise levels, I understand that Mr McLean has been corresponding with Steve Smith from Environmental Health over the summer period. That correspondence stated that new DEFRA guidance on road traffic noise remained in draft format. Since then, DEFRA has published maps showing the location of 'First priority areas', on their website and as you have stated the A19 at Billingham is not that list. As you will be aware, this area will be classed as an 'important area', which would be normally be dealt with after 'First priority location', however I am also led to believe that there maybe some flexibility for the Highways Agency to address important areas sooner rather than later, depending on local circumstances. I note your intentions to try and change the classification to a FPL through lobbying. Given this potential flexibility, I am proposing to write again to the Highways Agency asking for their opinion given noise levels and variations within them. The Council's Environmental Health team, will also arrange for further noise monitoring in the area when weather conditions are suitable.

I trust this clarifies the position and I can assure you that the Council will continue to work closely with the Highways Agency on this issue. Please don't hesitate to contact me should you require any further information.

Regards,

Richard McGuckin

Acting Head of Technical Services

Technical Services Division

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Billingham Town Council

Billingham Partnership

Fiona Hall MEP

Prospective Conservative candidate for Stockton North, Ian Galletley

Dear Mr Kerridge

Yes, I'm aware of the problem. In fact I lived in Kielder Close when it was installed! Times, as you know, will be very hard next year with the inevitable squeeze on public spending, regardless of who wins. However, since you are the third person to raise this with me since I became the candidate, the only promise I can give you is that, if elected, I will do all I can to make the replacement of the surface a high priority within the regional roads programme. It is not possible to be more specific at this time, since the opposition party is not allowed access to all the information necessary to make detailed policy commitments. You have a good case, nevertheless, and I support it.

Ian Galletley

Conclusions

The A19 Billingham bypass is one, if not the worst case of a concrete road surface effect upon a community. The road is very close to numerous properties, traffic travels at up to 70mph resulting in high levels of noise.

In short, the A19 concrete road surface is the wrong surface in the wrong location. We therefore request that the surface is replaced with quieter materials such as Whisper Asphalt as a matter of urgency.

Appendix

April 1999 Noise Report(HA122/8/25)

AGENDA NO: 17

PUBLIC PROTECTION REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

TRAFFIC NOISE FROM A19 BILLINGHAM DIVERSION
SUMMARY

This report highlights the problems being faced by residents adjacent to the stretch of the A19 running through Billingham which is of concrete construction and not the usual Tarmac finish. **Noise levels experienced by some residents exceed an acceptable level**, however, there are no statutory obligations on the Highway Agency to rectify this situation. Consideration must be given by Members to what course of action, if any, can be taken to alleviate this problem.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Representations be made to the D.E.T.R. advising them of the results of this study and the difficulties in taking action to address these noise issues.

INTRODUCTION

The stretch of the A19 indicated on Map A (Appendix 1) was built in 1980/81 to take traffic away from Billingham. However, it was originally planned back in the late 1960's and subject to public inquiry before a final choice as to the route was made. The assessment of impact due to traffic noise on adjacent dwellings would, therefore, have been made on traffic flow predication in the 1960's and 1970's. Those assessments would have been calculated using a 15 year traffic volume forecast i.e. up to around the middle of the 1980's. **Clearly nearly 15 years on there has been a significant increase in the volume of traffic using the road.**

For reasons that are not clear this section of the A19 was built using concrete as a finish and not Tarmac. Unfortunately a concrete finish produces significantly higher levels of noise from traffic as any driver would know.

At the time that this part of the A19 was being built the area of housing now affected (i.e. the Skripka Drive area) was being developed. An acoustic barrier consisting of a 2 metre high close boarded fence was constructed on top of the landscape embankment at the side of the A19.

The Position Today

In response to a total of five complaints from households in the area adjacent to this stretch of the A19 an in-depth noise survey was carried out. **The results show that 3 of the properties concerned are subject to levels in excess of 70dB with one around 75dB** (Appendix 2). The action level set in the Noise Insulation Regulations 1975 for the provision of noise insulation to houses affected by noise from new or substantially altered roads is **68dB**.

The most recent traffic survey conducted was in October 1992 and gave a 24 hour bi-directional weekday level of 50,865 vehicles, with an average peak hour flow of 4646.

This stretch of the A19 is not subject to the road widening scheme currently ongoing south of the A1027 roundabout.

The Problems

1. The concrete surface of the A19 which produces a significantly higher noise level than Tarmac

(about 6dB difference) .

2. The sheer volume of traffic using the road

3 . Inadequate acoustic attenuation

4. Proximity of housing to the noise source.

As item (4) is not reconcilable then no change can be made.

In terms of item (2) the volume of traffic will no doubt continue to rise as the dependence on the motor vehicle shows no sign of diminishing.

To change the surface of the A19 stretch would require major finances and as the concrete has a minimum life span of 40 years from construction (i.e. until the year 2020) is not going to be within the foreseeable future.

To achieve effective acoustic attenuation would require extensive works to provide a physical barrier of significant size between the A19 and the properties affected. Again this would be expensive and also would probably be impractical to achieve.

The Legal Position

Although it has been shown the residents living adjacent to this stretch of the A19, in Billingham, **are subjected to excessive traffic noise levels**, the local authority have no enforcement powers to resolve the matter.

Under the Noise Insulation Regulations 1975 the Highways Authority have a duty to offer a package of noise insulation measures to protect dwellings against noise from

new roads and have at their discretion, to do the same, where highways are substantially altered. Neither case apply for this stretch of the A19.

A19 Autolink have a 40 year concession for maintenance of the A19, but have no plans or obligations to replace the road section in question from concrete to tarmac.

Conclusion

The most appropriate method of reducing noise levels from road traffic on this stretch of the A19 is to **resurface the road**. However there is no requirement or obligation on any authority to do this.

Complaints about noise from the A19 are unlikely to be resolved indeed the problem is more likely to advise increased in the future.

The only course of action would appear to be to bring this matter and any future complaints to the attention of the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions.

M Chicken

Financial Implications:-

None to the Authority: dc9394

Web Site Comments

The Comments below have been made by concerned residents:-

NAME = Brian

SURNAME = Davies

EMAIL = brian.d@hotmail.co.uk

COMMENT = First visit to the site, do you have any other plans for action other than a petition, are there any legal protests that can be conducted (hoardings on the fence lines, traffic disruption, convoys etc.

As usual the DOT have spun us along with their promises and I am sure you are of the same belief that this will continue for years to come unless evasive action is taken.

What is DEFRA and the NAS take on the current situation and is there anyone lobbying for this in parliament?

Kind regards,

Brian Davies

NAME = Lucy

SURNAME = O'Brien

EMAIL = lucy.parker@dhl.com

COMMENT = I fully support the action group in what it is trying to achieve.

My husband and myself looked at a number of properties for sale on Wolviston Court in 2007-2008 (Chilcroft, Lenham, Glenfall Close) and although most of the houses were suitable and some exactly what we wanted we ended up not buying them primarily due to the road noise. They mostly had lovely large gardens as well but still it was the road noise that was the deciding factor for us.

Therefore you could say that the noise does have a serious impact on property prices in the area. We have finally bought a house on Thames Road where the noise is significantly less but certainly still audible from our garden.

Hope this information helps.

Kind Regards,

Lucy O'Brien.

NAME = Alan

SURNAME = Gallimore

EMAIL = alan.gallimore@ntlworld.com

COMMENT = I fully support the campaign and will raise the matter with Billingham Town Council.

NAME = Duncan

SURNAME = McConnachie

EMAIL = d_mccconnachie1@yahoo.co.uk

COMMENT = Well done on creating an excellent and very informative website..

I wrote to Frank Cook, the Highways Agency and the Euro MEPs in October to support the campaign for a noise reducing surface.

NAME = Graham

SURNAME = Edwards

EMAIL = grahamed@ntlworld.com

COMMENT = Oh for peace and quiet in the garden!

Because of the noise from the A19 it is impossible to call up the garden and be heard. Even the bird song is blotted out because of the traffic noise.

The erection of the fence a few years ago was a complete waste of time and money and did nothing to reduce the noise levels. It is even worse when the road is wet.

We have had no help with double glazing or any other noise reduction schemes and it is high time a much quieter road surface was installed.

When we moved here there was no A19 here and we saw and heard kestrels and curlews regularly and all was peace and quiet. Oh for a return of that.

NAME = John

SURNAME = Parker

EMAIL = j.parker1471@btinternet.com

COMMENT = keep on petitioning,when you are win I will be able to enjoy my garden in peace & acceptable levels of serenity.

NAME = Mr & Mrs

SURNAME = Bateman

EMAIL = the_river_uk@yahoo.co.uk

COMMENT = We would like to add our support to your campaign. Wolviston Court is not the only area affected. We live in Wynyard Rd/Green area in Wolviston Village and although maybe to a lesser degree we are certainly aware of road surface noise, particularly with a prevailing wind and definitely when sleeping with open bedroom windows. We too are concerned about the inevitable increase in traffic when the new hospital opens.

NAME = Robert

SURNAME = Ord

EMAIL = bobord7@hotmail.com

COMMENT = A number of years ago I attended a meeting on this subject in the Community centre. We all told the representative that an acoustic fence was a waste of money. Good luck with the campaign, and I am sure that if you are successful, then Frank will be there with his hard hat on for yet another photo opportunity

NAME = Eddie

SURNAME = Tierney

EMAIL = eddie.tierney@ntlworld.com

COMMENT = Its like everything else that Billingham is promised it never seems to materialise. The noise is now beyond a joke. You can not leave your bedroom window open when there is a westerly wind as the noise just about breaks the sound barrier when its busy

NAME = wendy

SURNAME = macdonald

EMAIL = d.macdonald7@ntlworld.com

COMMENT = we moved up to Skripka Drive 4 years ago from Low Grange due to the ever closing proximity of the land fill sites and the busy seal sands road. On our first night in our new house we couldn't sleep because of the noise from the traffic on the A19 - we couldn't believe that the noise from the A19 road is constant 24 hours a day. We now even know when there is going to be a hold up on the way to work as we can hear the sirens from our house in advance of leaving!! this noise is going to get worse when the new hospital is built with addition to the air ambulance flying over also. Its such a shame for such a lovely area, something has to be done.

Petition Response 2009/2010

We the undersigned, object most strongly to your government breaking a commitment to:-

Resurfacing the A19 Billingham ByPass with quieter materials, as part of the ten year program to resurface all concrete roads with quieter materials by March 2011.

The residents who responded to the above petition will be available as a separate document.