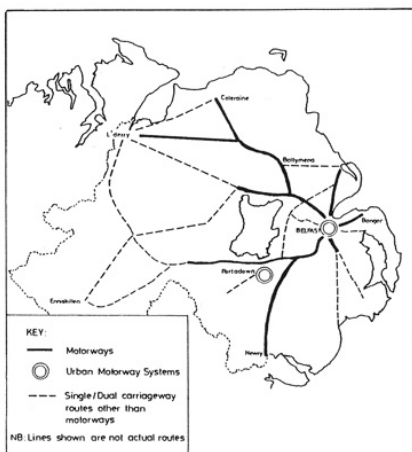


During the latter part of World War II considerable thought was given in Northern Ireland, as was in the rest of the United Kingdom, to “post war planning”. A commission was set up in 1942 “to prepare planning proposals and to make recommendations as to any legislative or administrative action necessary in connection therewith”. The commission produced an interim report ‘Planning Proposals for the Belfast Area’ in September 1944 (published in 1945). In addition to proposals for ring roads and bridges across the Lagan it advocated three new radial routes with motorway characteristics to relieve the existing roads: Antrim Road, Lisburn Road and Bangor Road. Another interim report was produced in 1946 — ‘Road Communications in Northern Ireland’. It dealt comprehensively with engineering and administrative aspects of the Northern Ireland road system. One of the recommendations was “the provision of a motorway between Belfast and Portadown to be undertaken at the earliest date”. In 1946, the Government accepted the Planning Commissions recommendations that approach roads to Belfast should be constructed.

A line was selected in the mid 1940s for what was to become the first section of the M2 motorway from the Shore Road, Belfast to Sandyknowes on the road to Antrim, with a spur over the hill to Corr’s Corner on the road to Larne. The original line for the outwards extension of the M2 motorway ran from Corr’s Corner, past Doagh to finish on the A36 Larne Road south east of Ballymena.



Motorway plan for Northern Ireland. (13 Feb 1964)

The concept included a possible extension round the east side of Ballymena to connect to the A26 road north of Ballymena. In 1962 an alternative route for the outwards extension of the M2 was chosen. This ran north-westwards from Sandyknowes, past Antrim on the north east side, northwards towards Ballymena, bypassed Ballymena on the eastern side and finished at Teeshan on the A26 north of Ballymena.

The 4.5 mile long M2 Ballymena Bypass was opened to traffic on the 25 April 1969 and cost £5M to build. The road works were constructed by Thomas Lowe and Sons and the bridges were built by Farrans. The bypass (coloured blue on the map below) runs from the A36 Ballymena-Larne Road at the south end to the A26 Ballymena-Ballymoney Road at the north end. At the south end a new dual carriageway (Ballee Road East) connected the bypass to the A26 Antrim - Ballymena Road. The large Larne Road Roundabout at the southern end of the M2 Ballymena Bypass was built to accommodate extension of the M2 motorway towards Antrim — the line of which lay about one mile east of the existing main road. The Teeshan junction at the northern end of the M2 Ballymena Bypass was built to accommodate extension of the M2 motorway towards Coleraine — on the western side of the existing main road.

The section of the M2 between Antrim and Ballymena



BALLYMENA BYPASS

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was deleted from the programme following a public inquiry in the early 1980s. The existing single carriageway road between Antrim and Ballymena has been converted to dual carriageway by building a new carriageway alongside the existing road.