



ARUNDEL BYPASS
NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMITTEE
www.arundelbypass.co.uk

Arundel Bypass Neighbourhood Committee

Secretary: Dr Emma Tristram, Stable Cottage, Binsted
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To: Oliver Dowden, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

100 Parliament Street, London SWA 2BQ

Cc: the Right Reverend Dr Martin Warner, MA, PHD, Bishop of Chichester; the Right Reverend Michael Langrish, Bishop; Marian Spain, CEO, Natural England

16 November 2020

Dear Oliver Dowden

Why St Mary's Church Binsted should be saved from the Arundel Bypass

If Highways England's new Preferred Route (the Grey Route) for the Arundel Bypass goes ahead, the new dual carriageway will cross the Binsted Rife Valley on a viaduct a few yards from St Mary's Church, Binsted, BN18 0LL, with traffic passing at the height of the top of the churchyard wall.

St Mary's must be the only 12th century church in the country to be built

- on the lip of a steep, secret valley created by melting ice at the end of the last Ice Age, and
- on top of an Iron Age earthwork (visible in Figure 2).

Figure 1: St Mary's, Binsted, seen from the Binsted Rife Valley, where the Grey route would pass





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The earthwork under the church is part of the 'War Dyke' system around Arundel, linked to loops of the river Arun. Its massive banks run along the edge of the valley far into the South Downs. It divided the kingdom of Cogidubnus from an 'Oppidum' or enclave for trading with the Romans. The Grey route would sever the remains of the earthwork itself further south.

Figure 2: Showing the massive Iron Age earth bank under the church



The steep, remote, wet valley is a wildlife sanctuary – one of only two 'Flushed Fen' habitats in coastal West Sussex. The inside of the church is a much-loved sanctuary too, with its own history: in 1868 it was restored by Thomas Graham Jackson, with a glass 'Cosmati pavement' in the chancel, like at Eastern carpet, in imitation of mediaeval work.

The church is a place of pilgrimage, not just for its faithful congregation, but also for many who come here to enjoy its peace and quiet, and its isolated setting with views over the valley and out into Binsted's wooded countryside. Will Parsons, founder of the British Pilgrimage Trust, has highlighted it on Twitter. <https://twitter.com/willwalking/status/984481287384846336>

The church has links to history going back 11,700 years to the end of the Ice Age, when the valley it overlooks was formed. The Iron Age earth bank system, War Dyke, is 2000 years old. The church itself is nearly 900 years old.

This gem of history, prehistory and culture and would be devastated by the Grey route plan – see Figure 3. The plan will be fiercely fought by local people: see Figure 4.



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Figure 3. Highways England's 'Grey Route' passes within a few yards of the churchyard wall at St Mary's, Binsted, on a viaduct

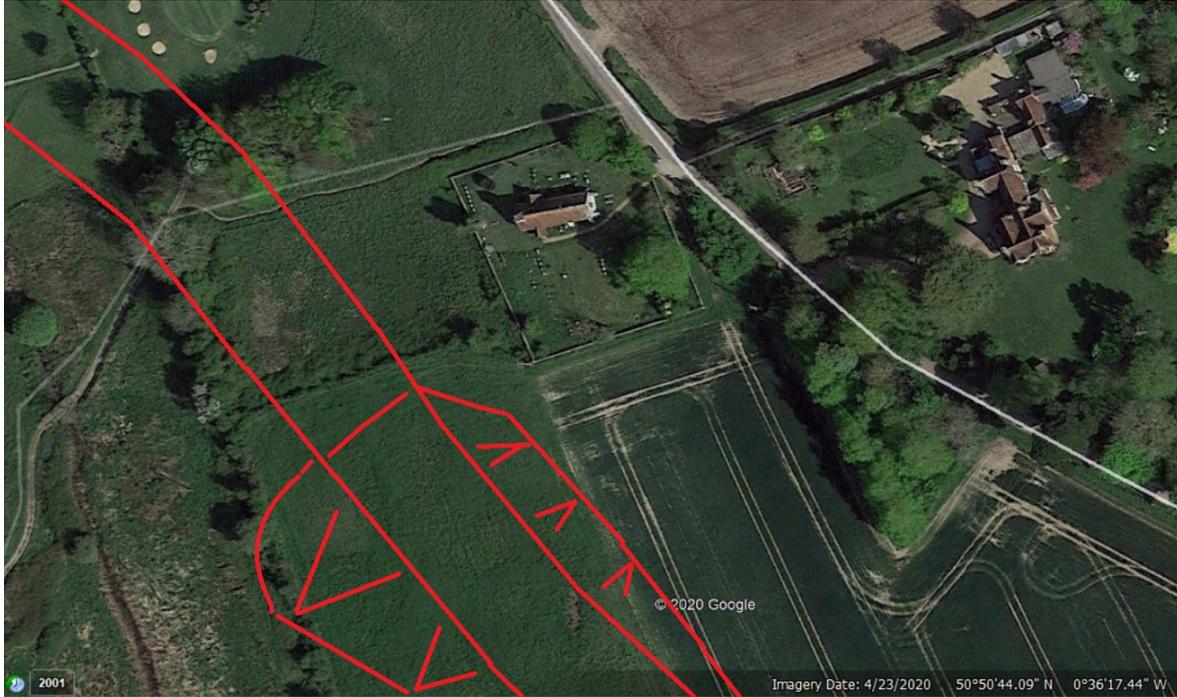


Figure 4. 'Socially distanced' demonstration 'Save Binsted'/'A27 Better not Bigger', St Mary's Binsted, 23 October 2020





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The Grey route, 8km long, would have many other destructive consequences. It would ruin the Arun floodplain and views of Arundel; It would shave one side off a new housing development in Walberton, just completed, and pass 180m from Walberton and Binsted School. It would cut through the ancient villages of Tortington and Binsted. It would destroy Binsted's village life, such as its Strawberry Fair (which funds the upkeep of the church) and its Arts Festival. The death of Binsted village would be symbolised by the ruin of the precious cultural icon that is St Mary's Church.

The Grey route would also cut off the South Downs National Park from the villages along its border and towns further south, destroy its setting (protected by national policy), and sever an 'extraordinary' area for wildlife (in the words of Natural England, 2019).

Grant Shapps has given the go-ahead, against the advice of the Planning Inspector, to building a road tunnel at Stonehenge World Heritage Site, which is 5000 years old. St Mary's, Binsted, in a dramatic setting which is twice as old as Stonehenge, is now in danger.

Can you step in, as the guardian of the culture of this country, and save St Mary's, Binsted, the Arun valley, the three villages that would be devastated by the Grey route, and the 'extraordinary' wildlife area, by asking the Department of Transport and the Treasury to stop Highways England's terribly damaging scheme?

Your sincerely

Emma Tristram

For details of the scheme, see: www.highwaysengland.co.uk/a27arundel

For more about Binsted, see www.binsted.org