

Arundel A27: Campaigners considering legal action

JAMES BUTLER
ws.letters@jpress.co.uk

Campaigners have announced they will be legally challenging the proposed route of the A27 Arundel Bypass.

The Arundel Bypass Neighbourhood Committee said it would consider asking for a judicial review of Highways England's decision to choose option 5a as its preferred route for the Arundel Bypass.

Highways England said the proposed route had been altered to lessen the impact on Binsted and to remove as little ancient woodland as possible after listening to residents' concerns, however there are still many concerned about the route.

The route starts with a new dual-carriageway from Crossbush junction, which will cross the River Arun via either an embankment or a viaduct, south of the existing A27. The route has been modified through Tortington so it is further south from Tortington Priory, a scheduled ancient monument protected by Historic England. To reduce the impact on ancient woodland, the route has been adjusted in the Binsted area before rejoining the existing A27 north of Walberton.

Highways England has claimed it will shave 12 minutes off the westbound journey and 8 minutes from the eastbound trip through Arundel.

A judicial review involves a judge looking into the lawfulness of a decision made by a public body. The committee said its decision was based on 'errors and bias' in the consultation, which the group claimed did not reflect the damage this route would cause to the village of Binsted and ancient woodland from the public. Highways England denies this.

Emma Tristram, secretary of the committee, said: "This road scheme would wreak an incredible trail of destruction.

"It would destroy part of the South Downs National Park, decimate ancient



The Crossbush junction along the A27

Picture by Eddie Mitchell

and ecologically important woodland, and devastate the two historic villages of Binsted and Tortington.

"It would also lead to a huge increase of traffic in Walberton, particularly on the semi-rural road, already at capacity, which leads to the new junction.

"The fight against this extraordinarily damaging road scheme has only just begun."

This comes as Walberton Parish Council, which includes Binsted and Tortington in its catchment area, also questioned the reliability of data regarding traffic predictions used during the consultation and called on the Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling, to look into the decision.

They said: "We consider this option to be simply unacceptable and unachievable without a large financial, environmental and social cost and we urge the Secretary of State to look in detail at the glaring complications and inaccuracies associated with this option before an enormous amount of money is wasted on this folly."

In response to news of a potential judicial review, Gillian Brown, leader of Arun District Council, which supported the scheme, said: "I understand why they would do it if they are local people, but for the benefit

of the majority we have to move ahead.

"I am absolutely delighted; it is the route that we chose after a lot of debate and deliberations.

"We have waited 30 years for this decision to be made, having been nearly there so many times before."

To the residents of Binsted and Tortington, she said: "I understand their concerns - of course I do - but life changes. We have so much more traffic than we had in years past, and the environmental impact of this increasing would do as much damage as the bypass.

"In Arun, we have 20,000 homes we need to build in 20 years; you can imagine how much more traffic that will cause."

Nick Herbert, MP for Arundel and South Downs, welcomed option 5a despite preferring option 3, which disrupted more ancient woodland rather than Binsted or Tortington.

He said: "People are entitled to go to law if they want to, but there has been a full public consultation and there will be a further consultation on this new route. There has been plenty of opportunity for people to give their views. I do not think myself that endless legal process can be allowed to hold up essential decisions on infrastructure." ● To Page 5