

Minutes of the Meeting of the Arundel Bypass Neighbourhood Committee Binsted Church, 7 pm, 21st October 2014.

Chair: Luke Wishart. *Secretary:* Emma Tristram. *Treasurer:* Tony Elphick.

38 people attended. Invitations had gone to most of the residents of Binsted by email and a few by printed notes through letterboxes. Some people from Yapton Lane whose houses would be affected by bypass Option B had also been invited. Bill Treves brought a large aerial photo of the area with Options A and B superimposed. There was also an information board with maps of all the routes ever suggested, and the current descriptions of the consultants' Options A-E.

Luke Wishart thanked everyone for coming and then described three of the options, A, B, and E, suggested for the Arundel Bypass by the Department for Transport's consultants at the Reference Group meeting on 27th August. The consultants have suggested that Options C and D be dropped.

1. Option A. This is the old Pink/Blue route which turns off the present A27 east of Havenwood mobile home park, clipping Binsted Woods, then going across Binsted Lane East and Tortington Common, and across the Arun valley. It avoids houses except for one house in Binsted Lane East.
It was selected in 1993 after a tortuous procedure with two public consultations, then dropped because of lack of money. It can be built without interference to traffic, but it is now within the South Downs National Park. It damages Tortington Common, which was not much valued 21 years ago when the route was chosen.
2. Option B. This new proposal seems to have been suggested as being outside the National Park. It avoids the National Park and Arundel completely. But it damages Binsted, Binsted valley and Walberton very badly. It passes close to or destroys houses and the golf course.
3. Option E. This would be online work, which would avoid the National Park. The non-dual carriageway sections of the present road could be dualled. The consultants have mentioned a tunnel under Hospital Hill (Option D). But the online option would be unacceptable to many people in Arundel.

Emma Tristram added some points about the current process, Arundel opinion and Tortington Common.

1. The current study was being conducted more or less in secret. There was some doubt about the exact route of Option B. Nick Herbert MP, when asked if he could stop it, said he did not know where it went. Consultants may be looking for a different offline route to compare with A for impact on the National Park.
2. Changes since the last bypass battle: individual lobbying was now much easier. There is a new group in Arundel (Arundel SCATE, run by Kay Wagland) in favour of more freedom of information, and alternatives to major road-building. It is affiliated to the nationwide

Campaign for Better Transport. Unlike the previous battle, they were not asking for a route through Binsted, and so far we were not asking for a route near Arundel, so liaison was much better.

3. The status of Tortington Common has changed. Many pines fell in the 1987 hurricane and it is now classed as 'ancient semi-natural woodland with areas of conifer plantation'. It was added to the Binsted Woods Complex SNCI in 2003. It is now in the National Park. Together with Binsted Woods (250 acres) it forms a very large (420 acres) varied woodland. It has been sold in small lots to new conservation-aware owners. No environmental groups now support Option A as they did 20 years ago. Option A's curve would bring more noise to Binsted. She hoped there were alternatives to supporting Option A as we had twenty years ago when it was the Pink/Blue route.

Bill Treves, Vice-chairman of Walberton Parish Council, then outlined their probable strategy. He said:

1. There is a need to respond quickly. The recent Atkins report suggested work on junctions at Chichester, Arundel and Worthing. The Chichester suggestions are going ahead, but the Government then decided they would fund major new roads at six traffic hotspots. One of these was the A27, at Arundel, Worthing and Polegate. The meeting of the Study's Reference Group in August, when the 5 options were suggested, did not issue maps, and its next meeting is on 4 November, when they will decide what to present to the chancellor in time for his announcement on 3 December about which of the six they will fund. It is likely they will fund new roads at Stonehenge, the A1, and something on the A27.
2. We need to write asking for something to be done. We could ask for Option B to be dropped, but it would be better to ask for the consultants to put all 5 options back on the table. The pro-bypass group (A27 Campaign) are pushing an offline bypass behind closed doors and trying to get options C-E dropped. It is totally undemocratic to be removing viable options without a public consultation.

Comments and questions followed. They included:

Q. Gilly Treves and others asked about public consultation. Bill replied that he thought if the plan went ahead there would be both a public consultation and a public inquiry. But the pro-bypass group are trying to close down the options that would be presented. The consultants' report is not binding, but it is better to have all 5 options.

Q. What is the South Downs National Park's attitude? Bill replied that all the road plans along the A27 involved land in the National Park and they were evolving a policy. Luke replied that a bypass was possible in a National Park just as fracking was.

Mike Tristram then spoke as a member of the South Downs Partnership. He described their policy, which is that major development pressures are to be resisted and new schemes have to meet the touchstones of the two 'purposes of the Park', also the duty of the Park to support the communities and economy of the area, and be judged against the 7 'special qualities' of the Park. They are working on a policy document which will need to be taken into account by the Department for Transport. They should be included in our mailing list for our letters.

Q. Who else should we lobby? There was a list of email addresses on the agenda (including the Roads Minister and the Department for Transport) and Bill Treves suggested also lobbying Arun District Council, Arundel Town Council, West Sussex County Council and others. A list will be put together. The list should then be circulated and anyone can write.

Q. Once the Chancellor has made his statement, if there is a change of government next year, could the project be dropped? Luke replied that that happened last time – there was a change of government and Pink/Blue was dropped. It could happen again. Bill replied that the UKIP candidate at Arundel had stated that he was not in favour of a bypass at Arundel.

Q. What was the Localism Act which Bill had mentioned? Bill replied that this implied we should have more say.

Q. What was the attitude of the Arun Local Plan? Bill replied that it was still safeguarding the Pink/Blue route (Option A) and was in favour of a bypass.

Q. Sue Elphick asked about the resolutions to be voted on. Our agenda was proposing voting on Options A, B and E. Bill was suggesting voting on a proposal to ask for all 5 options to be taken forward. It was not clear which should be done first or whether they were alternatives.

After some discussion Bill proposed a vote about Option B and then a vote about the proposal to take all 5 options forward. This was agreed.

Vote about Option B

Did anyone support Option B? No. Did anyone oppose Option B? All hands went up. Were there any abstentions? No.

Vote about asking for all 5 options to be taken forward

Did anyone support the proposal to ask for all 5 options to be taken forward? All hands went up. Did anyone oppose it? No. Were there any abstentions? No.

Q. Emma asked if the two resolutions contradicted each other. Bill replied that the definition of Option B was uncertain at this point and it was logical to ask for all five options to be taken forward and better defined, but also make a strong representation against a route through Binsted.

Q. Could the Prime Minister's office be contacted? Darren Mills replied that he had sent a letter to the Prime Minister's office. The website only allows 1000 characters, so he has asked for an alternative email address, which he will circulate.

Q. Could we get more information about the 27 August meeting of the Reference Group of the Study? Bill replied that Mike Roddham, who lives in Walberton, has made a request under the Freedom of Information Act to obtain the whole powerpoint presentation made at that meeting by the consultants.

Vote about greater transparency

After further discussion a further resolution was passed with no votes against it or abstentions:

To demand that the Stakeholders Reference Group Meetings are a great deal more transparent, with full disclosure of all matters discussed, and that no decisions which affect the countryside, and people's homes, livelihoods and businesses there, and are made without proper consultation with those people.

Q. David Tristram asked if businesses in Arundel were in favour of a bypass or if they felt it would lose them trade. Emma replied that Arundel SCATE had some members who were traders in Arundel and felt their trade would go down if there was a bypass.

Q. Was there an argument that a bypass would help reduce traffic in the National Park? Mike replied that though Nick Herbert often cites Storrington as an example of this, he had met someone from Storrington at the Arundel SCATE public meeting in September who did not believe a bypass at Arundel would improve traffic and air quality in Storrington.

Q. Several people then asked if we should have another vote on whether to support SCATE (South Coast Alliance on Transport and the Environment). Bill replied that the aims of SCATE – to support online and sustainable transport improvements – are included in Option E so we are implicitly supporting it by asking for all the options to be taken forward. Also it was important to be united, and though there was support for SCATE's attitude at the meeting, the result might be divided. Emma replied that copies of Arundel SCATE's letter to the Minister were available with the agenda so people could find out more about their aims and join as individuals.

Luke then thanked everyone for coming and the meeting closed.