

Arundel Bypass Neighbourhood Committee

Chairman Luke Wishart
Treasurer Tony Elphick

Secretary Emma Tristram
Stable Cottage
Binsted, Arundel
West Sussex
BN18 0LL
01243 551635
emma.tristram@dsl.pipex.com

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To: John Hayes, Minister for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House, 33 Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 4DR

Cc Eike Ndiweni-Müller, DfT Strategic Roads Investment
Secretary of State for Transport Patrick McLoughlin MP
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Eric Pickles MP

Dear Minister

A27 Feasibility Study: Arundel Bypass

We have had a new meeting (21 October) at Binsted of our rural community group, Arundel Bypass Neighbourhood Committee. 38 came to the meeting and we passed unanimously the following three resolutions:

1. That ABNC strongly objects to Option B through Binsted.
2. That ABNC asks for all the consultants' five options to be taken forward to the next stage.
3. That ABNC asks that the Arundel bypass process should be made a great deal more transparent, and that no decisions which affect the countryside, and people's homes, livelihoods and businesses there, are made without proper consultation with those people.

Here is a summary of the debate and reasoning which led to the above resolutions.

Resolution 1

Option B's damage to Binsted

Binsted is a very unusual, beautiful place. It is a spread-out, but unified, village of 35 houses. The immense mass of Binsted Woods (250 acres) protects it from the noise of the A27 and provides many superb walks. The lane, in the shape of a U,

unites the settlement and links it to the woods. This layout reflects Binsted's history as a self-sufficient farming parish from mediaeval times until 1933 (when it was joined to Tortington, then Walberton). Streams form strong boundaries to the west, south and east; watermeadows slope down to the streams, and the arable land (which was farmed communally) is in the centre. Eight buildings are listed, one of them the 12th century church. Binsted feels isolated, though it is so close to modern settlements.

The woods are not a solid block but embrace the northern part of the parish, with copses extending into the stream valleys and enclosing some fields, so as you walk the view is always changing. The Inspector's report for the South Downs National Park said (2006): 'The delicate topography and secrecy of the Binsted area is vital to the setting of Arundel'. Despite this, in 2009 only Binsted Woods were included in the National Park, not the rest of the village. All the projecting copses were included, so that 10 fields and 8 of the 35 houses are also included. Just over half the old Binsted parish is in the National Park.

Binsted's beauty, unity, and feeling of secrecy and isolation would be irrevocably harmed by putting a dual carriageway (Option B) through the southern part of the village.

Option B would cross both arms of Binsted Lane, destroying houses, and maroon 8 houses (two of them listed) in a cut-off loop to the south of it. The area where it would cross the lane (twice) is the part of Binsted with the most houses and where the houses are closest together. It then goes up Binsted Valley parallel to the lane and most of the other houses. This devastating damage would amount to the destruction of the village.

Damage to Binsted Valley

Binsted's western boundary is in a steep valley, invisible until you walk into it, containing many important habitats for wildlife including a rare 'flushed fen' habitat. Option B would cross this, damaging the habitats and the eastern half of the Avisford Hilton Hotel's golf course in the northern part of the valley.

Damage to Walberton

Option B would then destroy houses in Walberton, whichever of the two versions of its northern end was adopted. One version would demolish houses in Yapton Lane, including three within the National Park and National Park woodland. The other would cross Yapton Lane, demolishing houses, and damage the western half of the golf course and the Hilton Hotel grounds, passing close to Walberton's centre.

The proposal of Option B is causing miserable uncertainty for those whose houses and businesses are under or near the sketched route, both in Binsted and Walberton. House prices will be affected.

Damage from severance

If Option B went ahead not only Walberton, but other villages to the west and south such as Barnham and Yapton, would lose their good connections to the National

Park via many footpaths at Binsted which do not cross major roads. There is a cycle path from Bognor to Barnham and the National Park is thus connected with communities all the way to the coast. These connections would be lost if Option B went ahead.

Resolution 2

Our resolution 2 is based on two arguments – one, that apart from A all the options are ill-defined; two, that it is unreasonable and undemocratic to dismiss all online and near-online options before the public has had a chance to comment.

Ill-defined options

Option B is ill-defined because it is only known from CPRE's map made at the 27 August Stakeholder Reference Group meeting. If it was chosen as an alternative to A, to try to minimise damage to the National Park, the consultants may try to find another possible route to do that and call that 'Option B'.

Options C, D and E are all ill-defined. C ('offline closer to Arundel') is unclear but may mean a section of new road south of the station; D mentions a tunnel combined with widening, though widening could also be combined with C. E is ill-defined because though in the minutes of the meeting it is described as 'sustainable travel improvements', it has had the word 'online' added to its definition in a letter to the Campaign for Better Transport (it is now 'online and sustainable travel improvements') and it is not known whether this covers near-online work, such as either widening or short sections of new road. Also, it is unclear whether it is being treated as a separate option. The minutes say it will be included in Options A and B, but the letter is less clear.

In these circumstances it is reasonable to ask for better definition for all the options (except A which is already sufficiently defined), at the same time as objecting strongly to B as at present defined.

Retaining all the options

All the options recommended for rejection by the consultants and Nick Herbert MP are versions of online or near-online work, be it major or minor. Whether to have an offline bypass is such an important decision that it should not be regarded as having been taken 21 years ago with the choice of Pink/Blue (Option A). Pink/Blue was a compromise, least damaging route agreed after years of argument. A comparative study was done (EAULUL, 1993) but only compared Pink/Blue with the Green routes through Binsted, which were well to the north of Option B and are now within the National Park. Pink/Blue was rejected by the government in 2003 on environmental grounds. We view Option B as even more damaging. The areas which would be affected by an offline bypass are now even more highly valued with the creation of the South Downs National Park.

The decision whether to build an offline bypass in these new, changed circumstances must be a wide-ranging and open debate, and in order to have that all the options need to be kept on the table.

Resolution 3

Greater transparency

At present there is no opportunity for open debate with decision makers and there are no official maps of routes (apart from Option A). The current Feasibility Study about Arundel and other areas on the A27 is a semi-secret process. Option B has become publicly known through the CPRE delegate's map of the options shown at the 27 August meeting of the A27 Feasibility Study Reference Group. Our MP, who was at the meeting, is refusing to help and has stated that he does not know where it goes, though at the meeting he asked for both A and B to go forward.

Arundel SCATE has had a large public meeting at which it became apparent that many people were concerned that they knew nothing about the bypass and had not been consulted. Arundel Town Council has refused to have a public meeting about the bypass. Press reporting is heavily skewed in favour of the pro-offline-bypass 'A27 Action Campaign'. Publicity for any different views, and for the increasing public concern, is being suppressed.

There must be greater transparency and proper consultation with the public before such a momentous decision is taken.

Yours sincerely

Emma Tristram