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Why are we being kept in the dark over A27?



The A27 could pass through the countryside at Lavant

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SECRECY surrounding a proposed northern A27 route was slammed by outraged and impassioned residents.

In a bizarre twist, it was claimed Highways England's consultant Mott MacDonald had refused to consult with Lavant Parish Council – which would be directly impacted by a northern A27 route around Chichester – yet visited a resident and showed him plans.

“It appears they know a lot more now than we were told in the summer,” said Chichester north county councillor Jeremy Hunt at a packed-out Lavant Parish Council on Tuesday evening.

“I’m extremely upset that to date I’ve not had any more briefing on these plans.”

In the summer, as previously revealed by the Observer, county and district councillors were briefed by Mott MacDonald on the possibility of a northern route around Chichester.

It appeared six options were on the table. Four of these involved upgrading the current bypass south of Chichester but two others involved a northern bypass.

However, now it is believed by many a northern route may well be top of the list.

Jeremy Dry and several other residents have started the Chichester Deserves Better campaign to fight any plan to build a northern route.

Mr Dry said he became aware of the scheme after he was contacted by Mott MacDonald, which was doing ecology surveys.

“They’re not saying what their preferred option is,” he said. “But there are four route options that are very difficult for them to do because there’s so much traffic and it would cause gridlock.

“They said ‘these are very difficult options for us to do’.”

A six-week public consultation was due to take place this winter but has now been pushed back to March.

“This is moving incredibly quickly,” added Mr Dry.

“Under the planning laws it’s literally fast-tracked with George Osborne saying they want roads.”

Chichester Deserves Better now has a website www.chichesterdeservesbetter.co.uk and is running a petition to allow it to speak at a Chichester District Council meeting.

Mr Dry said it was vital for people to contact the campaign as soon as possible ahead of a crunch meeting on January 25 in private between key stakeholders and Mott MacDonald, where they believe a preferred option will be put forward.

He also said the group was contacting all district and county councillors to make them aware of what the plans involved, saying councillors were ‘ill-informed’ by Mott MacDonald.

The proposed public consultation in March was roundly condemned by the scores of residents gathered in Lavant, who said the consultation would be no more than a ‘stitch-up’.

“It will probably be a fait accompli by that point,” said Mr Dry. “It appears people just pay lip service to a public consultation, to be honest.”

Read more: <http://www.bognor.co.uk/news/local/why-are-we-being-kept-in-the-dark-over-a27-1-7109209#ixzz3twK2N5zq>