

# Election 2015

## What did it mean for the Arundel A27?

Congratulations to Nick Herbert MP on his successful re-election as our parliamentary representative; and to all the elected Arundel Town Councillors and the new or returned Parish Councillors. Commiserations also to those who were not elected, particularly those for whom this was their first venture into standing for democratic election.

Whilst the Arundel A27 issue looms large for many in the area, voters were voting for a person and a party rather than for a policy on this one issue. There was no difference between any of the parties with regard to Option B: Nick Herbert expressly said "I oppose it", and so did all other candidates. Most of those who voted do support the very general conservative manifesto commitment to "improving the A27" - the question is, how best to improve it?

ABNC looks to our MP, Town and Parish Councillors to restore local consensus around the principle of a better balanced and more widely consultative process than was possible in the limited pre-election timetable of the Feasibility Study. Option B should be ruled out from further HE work and consultation as clearly worse than Option A. The options for further HE work and consultation should be genuine alternatives. This means that an intermediate solution, of nearer-online improvements, should be considered alongside Option A in any future work or consultations by Highways England (HE), so then the consultation alternatives would be:

- Option A as the former Preferred Route, and
- a new viable alternative option which joins the Crossbush junction to the present Arundel Bypass Relief Road. This should be designed to achieve the Conservative manifesto commitment to improving the A27, *without* creating a 70mph dual carriageway expressway between Chichester and Worthing.

## What did the election candidates say about the Arundel A27?

### *Mon 27 April 2015, CPRE/ASCATE Arundel hustings "Countryside or Concrete?"*

*This environmental hustings was chaired by David Johnson of CPRE Sussex. Candidates from Conservative, Lib Dem, Labour, UKIP, and Green parties formed the Panel.*

*A variety of questions from the floor were put by the Chairman to the Panel. The meeting covered general rural planning and development issues as well as the A27 but it is the latter that is reported on here. A fuller report covering other aspects can be read on the >[CPRE Sussex website](#). It was clear, from points receiving applause and from those who took the opportunities to speak from the floor, that the great majority of those attending >opposed >a major new offline bypass through Arundel's countryside:*

**Nick Herbert (Conservative)** *said that he favoured a new offline Bypass route because of severance issues. He was in favour of Option A.*

*Option B had to be included because of the National Park but he opposed Option B. It was much worse than Option A because of its impact on the villages and because it would be more environmentally damaging: "I want to categorically repeat, I oppose Option B". Nick Herbert disagreed with CPRE's criticisms and said he was 'seized with Arundel's beauty' and 'passionate about the countryside and*

protecting it', and claimed to be 'at one with CPRE on the protection of Ancient Woodland'. [Editor's note: Arundel Bypass Options A and B both impact on Ancient Woodland.]

Because Arundel would be 'fully in view from the Bypass' he felt that passing trade would not cease to visit the town.

An offline Bypass was necessary for the economy and to 'ease the increasing volume of traffic that would be generated by proposed developments'. It would 'benefit the environment of the National Park and reduce pollution by stopping rat-running through Storrington' [Editor's notes: These often stated views await evidence testing. DfT figures show there are no significant detours from A27 through Storrington. Drivers using Storrington as the shortest route for their journeys would still do so if an offline Arundel Bypass were built. Feasibility Study Report 1 states air pollution and noise would be increased by a new Arundel Bypass. Economic benefit to justify an investment of this magnitude cannot be adequately evidenced from a very small percentage of businesses.]

He felt that Arundel residents' opinions mattered so there would be a public consultation but it was a strategic route from which others will benefit and therefore the decision will need to be taken at national level. [Editor's note: see Home Page for a discussion of whether the A27 should be deemed a strategic route in this sense, and what it might mean for Sussex.]

**Christopher Wellbelove (Labour)** had visited some of the sites, and he felt the idea of a 4-lane highway going through the historic Binsted woods was 'absolutely disgusting'. He opposed both Option A, and Option B by which the Binsted community would be 'ripped apart'. He was in favour of the online or near-online improvements which had been suggested by some in the local community (Ed.: eg see Philip Gadsby's proposal on the 'What are the Options' page).

He also felt that climate change was a key priority for the choices we make: 'simply building more roads is not the solution; more roads mean more cars, more congestion and more road-building. We must break the cycle and build a sustainable transport system. We all have a responsibility to protect our natural habitats for future generations'.

Planning should be more local-based, and transport decision-making should be devolved to local areas.

**Peter Grace (UKIP)** felt that improvements to A27 pinch-points around Arundel were needed but 'we can improve our area without destroying it'. A 40metre wide race track through the wetlands and woodlands around Arundel was "totally out of order".

We should improve the existing bypass route, not put in a new offline bypass. The needs of long distance haulage were important but they must be moderated by local access needs in the areas they pass through; for example access to the downs from south of the A27. Options A and B were solutions for the last century; we should design a 21st century solution that also integrates public transport, cyclists and pedestrians.

UKIP believed the decision, what solution we will leave to the next generation, should be made at a more local level.

**Isobel Thurston (Green Party)** said the public consultation was not going to be a democratic exercise - it should be on all the options, not just the offline bypass options A or B. The bypass would destroy our precious environment; it's sheer lunacy to spend over £200M on this sort of destruction. The more expensive options that have been ruled out may be better solutions.

But we do not need a new bypass. It would bring increased air and noise pollution, would not benefit the environment and would destroy our woodlands and the countryside further south. Preventing habitat destruction and landscape devastation is a main priority for the Green party.

We cannot tell what the effect of the road would be, the projections used by Parsons Brinckerhoff are guesswork. What is shocking is that the train and bus companies say 'we have no plans to increase our services'; we shouldn't accept that. We need creative solutions instead of a new road. We should move forward into the new century not stay in the last century. We need to be spending all that money on public and freight transport. We also need to accept that there is a cost to driving and if we want to drive we must sometimes wait a bit.

The Greens would bring decision making down to a more local level, and would avoid the jargon and technology barriers that have made public comment so difficult on, for example, the A259.

**Shweta Kapadia (Lib Dem)** 'At the moment there is Option A and Option B; we need to look at an offline solution, and possibly Option A is the better of the two solutions.' She would also be open to looking at an online proposal and online options should be included in the public consultation. 'I don't think we should take Option A and Option B and say that's it, I would like to keep an open mind on this.'

We need both public transport investment and road investment; we will still have to rely on our roads, and should encourage more electric cars. We need an infrastructure to deliver zero carbon Britain.

The organisers of the meeting, CPRE Sussex and ArundelSCATE, as facilitators, restricted their observations to the following:

**David Johnson, CPRE Sussex:** Our countryside is something that we hold in trust. I am concerned about the use of proper data: we should not make quick and short-term decisions for something that is going to last a long time. CPRE found the Feasibility Study's Stakeholder Reference Group 'difficult'; it had felt as though the old Folkestone-Honiton Trunk Route approach was pre-decided.

**Kay Wagland, ArundelSCATE:** Most of the traffic is short hop commuter traffic travelling 15 miles or less. We are basically dealing with commuter congestion which holds up the flow at peak times. Specific approaches targeting this peak time commuter congestion should be applied.

There were a number of comments from the floor about the Arundel Bypass, mostly against it. Richard Smith made points about other major road infrastructure projects we could learn from: that traffic in the centre of Newbury is now worse than before its bypass was built; and that the M25 destroyed nearby communities. [Editor's comment: If the A27 were to be upgraded as an Expressway, then a proportion of traffic currently using the M25 would undoubtedly use the south coast route instead of the M25.]

### **Brighton Argus 20 April 2015**

- [PM claims Labour's proposed decision to postpone A27 bypass is political not environmental](#)

- [Labour hits back](#)

### **Conservative candidate Nick Herbert statement 27 April 2015**

*I continue to support the pink-blue route which I believe is the best solution for the local economy, communities and the environment.*

*The Conservative Party's manifesto states that "We will take action to tackle some of the most notorious and longstanding problems on our road network, including improvements to the A303, A47 and A27."*

*[Editor's note: the manifesto commitment is only to 'improvements'. These need not involve an offline Bypass.]*

### **Labour Press Spokesperson statement 13 April 2015**

*Labour is today saying that we intend to go ahead with the works on the A27 with the exception of the specific Arundel bypass – this is due to cut through a National Park and so raises a number of environmental issues that need to be resolved before we give this one section of road improvement the go ahead. Instead of an uncosted Tory plan they have no idea how they will pay for, Labour will deliver a fully funded rail fares freeze for one year.*

[Click here for ABNC Press release commenting on this statement](#)

### **The Arundel & South Downs Constituency Labour Party Parliamentary Chair Chris Wood told us on 31 March 2015:**

*We are opposed to Option A, due to the environmental impact on the Arun Valley and Binsted Wood and encroachment onto the South Downs National Park. In addition, it would have a detrimental effect on the community of Binsted [Editor's note: sc. Tortington].*

*We are also opposed to Option B, due to the environmental impact on the Arun Valley wetlands and its unacceptable impact on the villages of Walberton and Binsted and wider community. In addition, having spoken to a number of locals, I agree with your view that a full by-pass could well have a detrimental effect on the [Arundel] traders and businesses.*

*We do, however favour and support the third option we discussed, which is described on the Arundel Bypass Neighbourhood Committee website as a possible 'Option C'. The option offers by far the best value for money improvements, whilst minimising impact upon communities and the environment.*

*(The Labour Parliamentary Candidate is Christopher Wellbelove.)*

**The Green Party Parliamentary candidate Isobel Thurston** told us on 10 Feb 2015:

*Chichester and Bognor Green Party, Arundel's local party, are against the building of a new bypass on the A27 at Arundel. We do not want to see countryside and woodland give way to concrete; nor do wish to see a community devastated at Binsted and Walberton.*

*We believe that economic arguments in favour of a new road are largely mythical as no proof has yet been produced to support them; in spite of local press and official bias, it is clear that many local people are not in favour of the bypass proposals.*

*We propose that solutions to traffic congestion should be creatively worked out in consultation with the community and the money allocated for the road should be used for such solutions.*

**The UKIP Parliamentary Candidate Peter Grace** told us on 25 January 2015:

*Both Option A and Option B should be opposed for two main reasons:*

*I, and UKIP, oppose damaging our environment – we should be utilising and improving current road lines, brown field sites, etc. not developing and destroying our green fields, our woodlands and our wet lands unless it is absolutely necessary and there are no alternatives.*

*I, and UKIP, oppose being dictated to by Brussels and Westminster – we should utilise a 21st century traffic flow/road designer to design the best solution, integrating the community and not just bowing down to the motor vehicle. We should all be told the pro's and con's for each option and then hold a local referendum so the people who live, work and drive in and around Arundel (within 10-15 miles, for example) should then be able to make an informed decision as to the right solution.*

*After much discussion about alternatives, West Sussex UKIP are actively opposing both Option A and Option B's, for the reasons above.*

**The Conservative Party Parliamentary Candidate Nick Herbert** told us on 7 November 2014:

*My reasons for supporting improvements to the A27, including an Arundel bypass, are that the delays caused are harmful to the local economy and to the environment.*

*...An ugly causeway across the Arun Valley has not been proposed, and clearly good design would be important for our beautiful landscape...*

*I remain strongly in favour of A27 improvements, including an Arundel bypass on the 'pink-blue' route, but will listen carefully to local views.*

Editor's Note: a massive causeway, rather than a 'beautiful bridge', across the Arun Valley, HAS now been proposed by Parsons Brinckerhoff in their March 2015 Feasibility Study Reports.