

Don't scar Downs

First published Thursday 18 June 2015 in [Letters](#) in The Argus (Brighton & Hove)

No one doubts the A27 is in dire need of improvement. What divides opinion is just how.

We all need to get around but must get around more lightly. So where are the forward looking plans for speedier and more direct rail along the coast and into the countryside, and better connections by bus, cycling and on foot?

We cannot afford to sacrifice our stunning countryside to ugly utilitarian roads, roads which will scar our landscape forever.

We need real evidence to show that there is a real need, and no alternative, before for any new roads are considered, especially those which damage precious countryside.

The A27 government study showed clearly that there wasn't a demonstrable increase in traffic in either West or East Sussex and that the economic case for new roads was not backed up with hard evidence either.

However if there are going to be new roads, and the case can be made, the choices must be sympathetic to the landscape, and make the most of existing amenities and urban centres.

Why not look at the difference junction improvements could make, before considering dualling and by-passes?

It is vital that real environmental costs be factored in, and if roads are to go ahead at Arundel, Worthing and Sompting, the best environmental and landscaping options must be chosen, including tunnelling.

In fact, the least environmentally damaging road scheme options at Arundel and Worthing were ditched at an early stage because of high costs and the government's recently selected Arundel by-pass road scheme, clearly the most damaging, was chosen.

This decision is totally contrary to the Rt Hon John Hayes' aims for road and transport infrastructure to be more 'beautiful' and integrated into the landscape.

How can a road scheme that goes through the [South Downs National Park](#) possibly be squared with John Hayes' sentiments?

Improving the A27 isn't just about speeding up journeys at any cost, it has to work better for communities and for the environment, blending existing roads into the landscape and reducing noise, air and light pollution.

Any scheme that is going to affect the lives of everyone living across East and West Sussex must allow local people a real say and much greater ownership of what's proposed if it is to improve their lives.

A holistic strategy, developed through a process genuinely providing greater local involvement and considering both improved public transport and improved roadways is needed.

A strategy our MPs across Sussex and their colleagues in Government must take seriously.

P Hudd, Highdown Road, Hove