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Dear Residents

ARUNDEL BYPASS

I thought it would be helpful to update Walberton, Binsted and Fontwell residents about the possibility of an Arundel bypass and A27 improvements.

An Arundel bypass was first proposed in 1985, and was elevated to the Conservative Government's main roads programme in 1996, but was shelved by the Labour Government after 1997. The 'South Coast Multi Modal Study' in 2002 confirmed the need for it, but there was no movement until the current Government produced its National Infrastructure Plan. Last year the Government published plans for a £69 million upgrade to the Chichester bypass and a feasibility study to look at problems on the A27 on the south coast, including Arundel and Worthing, identified as one of six of "the most notorious and long standing hotspots in the country".

The Department of Transport has set up a reference group for the A27 feasibility studies in West Sussex, which is attended by me and Tim Loughton MP, amongst many others. At the penultimate meeting of the group we were shown a powerpoint presentation of a number of possible options for Arundel. The 'online' route proposals, which would approximately follow the existing route through the Town, involving part tunnelling, would be prohibitively costly. I am also aware that a dual carriageway dividing Arundel would be deeply unpopular and is not supported by the Town Council. I therefore welcome the fact that these routes are not expected to be taken forward.

Two 'offline' routes are under consideration. The first (Option A) is the 'pink-blue' route to the south of Arundel, which commanded broad consensus when it was agreed before, but would now run through a small section of the South Downs National Park. The second (Option B) is a longer route that would avoid the Park, joining the A27 further to the West and running between Binsted and Walberton. I appreciate concerns in Binsted and Walberton about Option B, which I do not support, and which would also be significantly more expensive than the 'pink-blue' route.

I should stress that we were only shown these possible routes on screen at the reference group meeting and were not permitted to have maps. Officials stress that their lines on maps are only indicative to enable their consultants to evaluate the cost and impact of various routes. I regret that anti-roads campaigners present at the meeting drew their own maps and have excited concern as though formal route proposals are being made, which they are not. Were this to happen, there would be a full and formal public consultation. We expect that an update on the A27 may be given by the Chancellor as part of his Autumn Statement on Wednesday 3 December.

I have consistently held the view - as did both of my immediate predecessors - that we need an Arundel bypass along the 'pink-blue' route. I made my support for the bypass clear at the general elections in 2005 and 2010, and have raised the issue in the House of Commons. I am aware that all of Arundel's elected representatives at town, district and county council level have taken the same view. My judgement is that the

majority of my constituents agree, but I appreciate that some do not, and as on any issue I will listen with care and respect to all local viewpoints and take them into account.

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. Coastal towns such as Littlehampton and Bognor suffer from poor transport links, while motorists 'rat-run' not just through the historic town of Arundel but also through the South Downs National Park. Downland villages suffer from heavy traffic as a result. Storrington has a serious air quality problem. We therefore need to take a balanced view of the environmental impact of a bypass, recognising the cost of inaction.

For this reason I helped to form the A27 Action Campaign (www.A27Action.co.uk) which is an alliance of local councils, businesses and MPs working together to get the road improved and upgraded. Specifically, the campaign is calling on the Government to consider a case for dualling the A27 across West Sussex, improved junctions at Chichester, Fontwell and Brighton, a bypass of Arundel, improvements to the Worthing-Lancing corridor, and improved A27/A26 access to Newhaven.

There are around 25,000 vehicle movements through Arundel every day, 89 per cent of which is through traffic and not local. With additional development being planned in West Sussex, improvements to the existing dualled section at Chichester, and two new roads linking into the A27 either side of Arundel (the Lyminster bypass and the A29 relief road), the pressure on this route and delays at Arundel will only increase. I therefore believe that the need for a bypass will become ever greater.

I am concerned that some of the suggestions being made about an Arundel bypass are misleading. There would not be development between the town and a bypass, because the land is either flood plain or National Park. Indeed, the green gap between the town and the existing 'relief road' has been maintained. The 'pink-blue' route would not go through Binsted's ancient woodland, but through the replanted area of Tortington Common. I would strongly support environmental measures to offset or mitigate any woodland loss. An ugly causeway across the Arun Valley has not been proposed, and clearly good design would be important for our beautiful landscape.

It has also been suggested that a better alternative would be to invest in public transport. I do not believe we have to choose between roads and public transport investment: we need both. We have recently seen better signalling installed on the Arun Valley railway line at a cost of £21 million, and the £6 billion upgrade which is underway at London Bridge will make a huge difference to services by 2018. Network Rail is also, at my request, evaluating the Arundel Chord, a short piece of track that would enable trains to turn east below Arundel. I would also like to see more cycle routes in West Sussex. However, over two thirds of my constituents travel to work by car, while fewer than 7 per cent do so by rail and 1.5 per cent do so on bicycles.

I remain strongly in favour of A27 improvements, including an Arundel bypass on the 'pink-blue' route, but will listen carefully to local views. I met Walberton Parish Council this week and have already represented their concerns to the Government. I must emphasise that should any specific proposals be made in the future, there will be full and formal public consultation on them. Do please let me know your views, and also provide feedback to the A27 Action Campaign.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick Herbert." followed by a horizontal line underneath.

NICK HERBERT