

Fresh debate on A27 is 'not enough'

Plans to hold another public consultation on options to improve the A27 at Arundel are 'not good enough', the Arundel Bypass Neighbourhood Committee has said. Highways England announced earlier this month it will hold another public consultation next spring, as important new evidence had become available since the decision to adopt a tweaked version of the 5a option was made in May.

Responding to the news, the Arundel Bypass Neighbourhood Committee has said holding a new consultation was 'not good enough' and that 'Highways England's culture must change'.

Mike Tristram, spokesman for the committee, said: "Highways England's announcement of a second non-statutory public consultation about the Arundel Bypass is a first small step in response to criticisms of the 2017 consultation.

"But we suspect that Highways England are still trying to have their cake and eat it.

"The announcement does not go far enough. For example the Preferred Route - Option 5A, the most environmentally damaging of their three options - remains in place, no new information is promised about Option 5A, and there is no promise to include less-damaging options than the three considered last time."

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Highways England have promised new traffic figures, a new junction design, and new information about Options 1 and 3 - but not about Option 5A, Mr Tristram said.

Yet the lack of correct information about Option 5A was one of the main criticisms of the 2017 consultation, he said.

Highways England's surveyors have been working hard on wildlife surveys along the route of Option 5A ever since the 2017 consultation, he said.

"We call on Highways England to release its new ecological data now," added Mike. "The public has paid for the ecological surveys: Highways England should give the facts about what they are proposing to destroy.

"It's not difficult: we are asking Highways England and their consultants to be more honest and thorough this time round.

"Their culture has to change."

He added that an important option to include would be the New Single Purple route; a wide single-carriageway on a similar route to Highways England's dual-carriageway Option 1, promoted by local people.

This would be less ecologically damaging, cost far less and improve the traffic problems at Arundel, he said.

Since the selection of the 5a option in May, both campaigners and the South Downs National Park Authority have called for a judicial review of the decision. Last month it was announced that Emma Tristram, author of Binsted and Beyond, had been granted permission for her legal challenge to proceed.