

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL ON 3 MARCH 2022

SUBJECT: National Highways Proposals for the A27 Arundel Improvements Response to Statutory Consultation (Grey Route)

REPORT AUTHOR: Roger Spencer – Engineering Services Manager
DATE: February 2022
EXTN: 37812
AREA: Technical Services

LEAD MEMBER: Cllr Gunner, Leader of the Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The report seeks authorisation to respond to National Highways (formerly Highways England) with a corporate response to the Statutory Consultation, regarding the Preferred Route for the Arundel section of the A27 Trunk Road improvements. It sets how the issues raised by Arun District Council in the non-statutory consultation in 2019 have been addressed and raises other pertinent issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 To authorise the Chief Executive to respond specifically in respect of the Grey Route proposal Statutory Consultation as follows:
 - (a) Welcome the opportunity to comment upon the proposals for the off-line 'Grey Route' bypass proposals;
 - (b) Notwithstanding the Council's preferred option: the Magenta route, not being taken forward, support is given to the Grey route subject to the following (c) & (d);
 - (c) The current discussions regarding inclusion of a south facing Ford Road Junction with the new A27 road continue between all relevant partners;
 - (d) National Highways strive to further mitigate to reduce rat-running and increased traffic in local villages, especially Walberton;
 - (e) Suggest that a high-level deck is the most appropriate form for the viaduct across the River Arun valley and flood plain;

- (f) In regard to the Yapton Lane options, to take forward the option that has the less risk and greater constructability but suggest that this should be balanced by the views of the immediately affected residents and businesses;
- (g) Encourage National Highways to continue dialogue with the Littlehampton Harbour Board in respect of utilising the port of Littlehampton in the construction phase of the project

- 2. That representation be made to Government (Department for Transport (DfT) and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), to urge a resolution to the mis-match in guidance and methodologies for traffic modelling thus cost benefit analysis, for new road schemes and development projections; and
- 3. Note that a business case is being developed in partnership with West Sussex County Council and encourage the continuation of partnership working with National Highways in addressing the Council's concerns over the Ford Road Junction

1. BACKGROUND:

National Highways (previously Highways England) undertook a Public Consultation in 2017 and then a 'Further Options Consultation' in 2019. At its meeting of 10 October 2019, the Council responded to that latter consultation and supported the 'Magenta' route with further comments as set out below in Section 1.x.

Since then, National Highways has considered all of the responses and arrived at a Preferred Route Announcement (PRA - 2020) – selecting the Grey Route as the most appropriate

The scheme proposals which are the subject of this Statutory Consultation have been refined following the PRA in October 2020. It should be noted that this consultation is in respect of the Grey Route proposals and whilst all further suggestions and comments will be welcomed by National Highways they should be in respect of the Grey route.



The Grey route is shown above and is an 'off-line' solution. It runs from the existing Crossbush Junction, in the east (although the junction will be remodelled), over the railway line, crossing the River Arun and its flood plain on a viaduct. It then passes to the south of Binsted Wood, through part of the Avisford Golf Course, crossing Tye Lane, to reconnect with the existing A27 around Copse Lane, Walberton.

1.1 Main aspects of the proposals

- The River crossing will be achieved by the provision of a viaduct – this was an option but is now confirmed. However, the height of the viaduct is yet to be determined – a deck close to the ground would intrude less into the surroundings but give the impression of a greater mass, whereas a deck on higher supports would give the impression of visual openness but project further into the landscape
- The Grey route avoids SDNP and has a reduced impact on woodland
- Two options still remain for Yapton Lane – the new road could be in a deeper cutting, allowing Yapton Lane to stay roughly as it is now (but on a bridge), this has constructability issues for the new road. Alternatively, the new road could be put in a shallower cutting but this would necessitate Yapton Lane being raised and moved off-line to avoid overbearing on the existing Yapton Lane properties
- The western portion of the new road has been reduced to 50mph, to safely allow for tighter curves, which means the road can be sited slightly further away from Walberton & St Mary's Church, Binsted. The 50mph limit would extend to the eastern Fontwell roundabout.
- The tighter curvature of the new road also allows the 'tie in' to the exiting road to be slightly east of where it was going to be at the Walberton end, thus helping to mitigate bat issues at the woods near Copse Lane.
- Western section to have low surface noise treatment.

Green bridges have been provided and connectivity for vehicles and non-motorised users maintained.

The two undecided issues in the list above (height of viaduct and Yapton Lane) would be resolved at a 'design fix' prior to the submission of the scheme at Development Consent Order (DCO) stage.

A number of other design issues are still being addressed and so detailed traffic modelling and the ultimate cost estimate (thus the benefit cost ratio) are not yet finalised. However, this Road Investment Strategy 2 (RIS2) scheme has demonstrated sufficient funding confidence to proceed.

Average journey time savings of 9.3 mins are envisaged over the current average journey time of 15.3 minutes from the Fontwell East Roundabout to Crossbush.

1.2 Issues

One of those issues is the amount of increased traffic in and around local villages e.g. Walberton. This is seen by National Highways as an issue that needs to be resolved.

Rat-running to avoid congestion at the Fontwell roundabouts is also an issue concerning many local residents. This is an issue that National Highways recognises but a solution is not integrated into the current Grey route proposals. However, further, separate work is envisaged for the main A27 in that area.

The question of a junction at Ford Road is still under discussion but currently, a junction does not form part of the National Highways proposals. This is fundamentally a question of economics (justified by traffic modelling) and would require external funding. There is a mis-match in the inclusion (or not) of housing numbers from the Local Plan within the road scheme development.

Arun District Council and West Sussex County Council have jointly commissioned the production of a business case to look into justifying/funding a Ford Road junction.

The main issue regarding the inclusion (or not) of a Ford Road junction in the current Grey route proposals is one of economics. There is wide local agreement that a south facing junction would better serve the new development south of the new road and avoid 'rat-running' through existing settlements.

However, National Highways guidance (traffic modelling etc.) does not account for future development in the same way as the Local Planning process. It is considered worth making representation to Government on this apparent mis-match of procedural guidance.

1.3 The Consultation Process

The Statutory Consultation runs from 11 January 2022 to 8 March 2022 and includes twelve manned consultation events, as well as six online virtual consultation and live chat events. There are 15 document deposit points.

The consultation involves the availability of a consultation brochure, together with a feedback form and a non-technical summary of the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR). (hardcopy and online). All of the supporting documentation is available online.

The full PEIR covers :

- *Air Quality*
- *Cultural Heritage*
- *Landscape and Visual Impacts*
- *Biodiversity*
- *Geology and Soils*
- *Material Assets and Waste*
- *Noise and vibration*

- *Population and Human Health*
- *Road Drainage and Waste Environment*
- *Climate as well as the cumulative and in-combination effects*

The proposals are shown in the consultation material as visualisations and can be viewed as a 'fly-through' in the online media

It is suggested that in its response, the Council, should welcome an off-line bypass and note that the new road should bring multi-million pound benefits to the District and region; a study in 2013 (Parsons Brinckerhoff 2013) suggested a figure in excess of £700m, it is however, unfortunate that the Council's previously preferred route (Magenta) was not adopted as the preferred route.

It is further appropriate to voice regret that the Ford Road Junction is not included but that the Council is keen to work with National Highways to find a way of including it in the final scheme, or at the very least to find a solution that does not preclude the construction of a junction at a later date.

1.4 Mitigation proposed to address the Council's previously raised concerns

As part of the Council Resolution of 10 October 2019, the following comments were made to the then Highways England:

NB comment from Resolution shown below in *italics*

- (a) *The Council urges Highways England to consider all potential opportunities on any preferred route corridor, which would further reduce the impact on residents and the environment;*

It is noted that extensive redesigns have been made to reduce (but not remove) the effect on local residents, particularly those in Walberton. Work has been done to facilitate bat populations as well as ensuring existing drainage patterns and the effects of the new road drainage are accounted for.

- (b) *The Council encourages Highways England to construct any bypass and consequential embankment, viaducts and bridges to the highest possible architectural standards and to take appropriate account of any potential flooding issues;*

It is understood that an independent design panel has viewed the proposals favourably. The choice between a low or higher level viaduct across the River Arun flood plain is one that achieves the most elegant solution; this is considered most achievable by a higher level deck

- (c) *The Council would encourage Highways England to consider amending any 'off-line' preferred route to provide a junction between the proposed A27 Bypass and Ford Road to improve accessibility to and from communities (existing and proposed) south of the South Coast Mainline Railway and the residential amenity of residents in Ford Road, Arundel;*

Addressed elsewhere in this report

- (d) *The Council would welcome further investigation into the routing of Footpath 2207 at Crossbush, with the potential for an on-line footbridge rather than a diversion that is routed close to the Arun Valley Railway;*

A bid has been developed for a scoping study to address these issues; this has recently been successful with money coming from National Highways “Designated Funds” – this is funding that is provided to make improvements to the local area of new projects but which do not form part of the core objectives of a scheme

- (e) *The Council would encourage Highways England to consider using the port of Littlehampton and the River Arun to barge aggregate and other construction materials to the construction site;*

Discussions are ongoing with the Littlehampton Harbour Board in this respect

- (f) *The Council would encourage Highways England to support, through their ‘Designated Funds’, the creation of a cycleway between the South Downs National Park via Arundel to the coast, along the River Arun and improved parking for commuters, tourists and residents at Ford Railway Station.*

Again, bids for ‘Designated Funds’ have been developed but the outcomes are, at present, unknown.

1.5 Other Issues

Once the new A27 bypass is constructed, the existing portion would be ‘de-trunked’. There is scope for a range of options, especially the existing dual carriageway section between the Arundel Arboretum and the new tie-in at Walberton. Once de-trunked the road would be handed over to West Sussex County Council, to form part of the local road network.

There would be need for only a two-way single carriageway, giving scope for a cycle way; alternatively, the redundant carriageway could be removed, ‘giving back’ the land to nature. Discussions and considerations about this aspect are ongoing.

1.6 Next Steps

Following an analysis of the responses to the Statutory Consultation and a design fix, which will allow for accurate cost estimates and the production of final traffic modelling, the scheme and a Transport Assessment will form the Development Consent Order later in 2022.

A decision should be made by the Secretary of state in 2023/24, enabling a construction start in 2024 and the road being open and fully operational by 2027

1.7 Later steps

As noted above, some aspects of the proposals are not yet finalised and are subject to further investigation e.g. noise mitigation measures. The Environmental Management Plan will address temporary adverse effect of noise, vibration, dust etc. from certain construction activities and construction compounds. These aspects will need to be agreed with the relevant department of Arun District Council.

NB Full Council also RESOLVED in October 2019 that

Delegated authority be granted to the Director of Place to commission and submit any Local Impact Statement required as part of a formal Development Consent Order process working collaboratively with West Sussex County Council, Arundel Town Council, Walberton Parish Council, Lyminster and Crossbush Parish Council and the South Downs National Park Authority.

That authority stands and will be actioned appropriately.

2. PROPOSAL(S):

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3. OPTIONS:		
Agree with, reject or amend the Recommendations		
4. CONSULTATION:		
This report is to formulate a response to a third party consultation. Wide ranging public consultation undertaken by Highways England, with letters to householders and a wide-ranging approach to businesses; exhibitions (manned and static) and a widely available brochure & questionnaire with supporting information available on-line.		
Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council	See above	
Relevant District Ward Councillors		
Other groups/persons (please specify)		
5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)	YES	NO
Financial		X
Legal		X
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		X
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		X
Sustainability		X
Asset Management/Property/Land		X
Technology		X
Other (please explain)		X
6. IMPLICATIONS:		
None directly from these recommendations as this is a consultation and the scheme will be subject to a formal assessment DCO process.		

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:
To enable a response to be made to National Highways in respect of the Statutory Consultation process for the Grey Route (National Highways Preferred Route) for the A27 Arundel Bypass

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:
Consultation Brochure
Arundel Bypass Statutory Consultation brochure.pdf (citizenspace.com)
All National Highways 2022 Statutory Consultation material - A27 Arundel Bypass Statutory Consultation - National Highways
A27 Arundel Bypass Wider Economic Impact Study – Parsons Brinckerhoff 2013

