

Arun District Council

REPORT TO:	Planning Committee 14 December 2023
SUBJECT:	Fitzalan Link Road Acoustic Barrier
LEAD OFFICER:	Neil Crowther, Group Head of Planning
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor June Hamilton - Chair of Planning Committee
WARDS:	Wick & Brookfield
CORPORATE PRIORITY / POLICY CONTEXT / CORPORATE VISION: Use regeneration opportunities to attract new and relocating businesses to the district.	
DIRECTORATE POLICY CONTEXT: The proposals will help to enhance the quality of the natural and built environment, protect the district's natural and heritage assets and to promote economic growth in a sustainable manner, striking a balance between the need for development and the protection of scarce resources.	
FINANCIAL SUMMARY: The decision of the Committee in respect of the Fitzalan Link Road acoustic barrier potentially has substantial financial implications for the Council.	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 For the Committee to confirm the councils position concerning the Fitzalan Link Road Acoustic Barrier.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee resolve to defer further consideration of this matter until the northern section of the Fitzalan Link Road is opened (currently scheduled for Autumn 2024).

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 3.1 Planning Committee has considered numerous reports on this issue in recent years. In summary, the Committee have expressed a preference for the acoustic barrier to be reduced in height but have acknowledged the likely significant costs associated with this. Further detail on likely costs, process and risk have been sought but it has been exceptionally difficult to obtain expert advice on the subject.

4. DETAIL

- 4.1. This report follows on from previous reports to Planning Committee in May 2021, December 2021, May 2022 and February 2023. The outcome of these reports was that the Committee stated a preference to secure the reduction in height of the acoustic barrier to 2.5m. The Committee had resolved to seek expert advice (to be reported back to Committee) on the likely costs associated with this. A brief for this work was prepared and issued but no fee proposals were received.

- 4.2. After the meeting in February 2023, this was revisited but only one local company responded but only in respect of the likely construction process itself. The Council has been unable to obtain any advice on the legal process and risks associated with the process.
- 4.3. The report to Planning Committee in February 2023, refers to the likely required process and likely scale of costs.
- 4.4. At the request of Planning Committee, a consultation process took place with residents on the eastern side of Highdown Drive and Amberley Close. This was reported to Planning Committee in April 2022.

61% of those consulted expressed a preference for a reduction in height of the barrier regardless of whether it results in greater noise disturbance and 20% expressed a preference for it to be retained as it (with the remainder supporting a reduction only if there would be no greater noise).

- 4.5 Due to the frustrations in obtaining relevant expert advice it is difficult to give advice on a way forward currently. Further, it is anticipated that traffic flows will change once the road is completely open. Following informal discussions with members, it was suggested that any further decisions be held in abeyance until the northern section of the Fitzalan Link Road is open so that a more informed assessment of traffic volumes and noise disturbance can be taken.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1. Nothing specific at this stage.

6. OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

- 6.1. The Committee must determine if they wish to pursue the resolution made in May 2022 or to agree to cease this and do nothing because of the likely scale of costs.

7. COMMENTS BY THE INTERIM GROUP HEAD OF FINANCE/SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 7.1. I endorse the recommendation contained in the report to “cease exploring options to reduce the height of the acoustic barrier”. As stated in the report the cost of such action is prohibitive (excess of £2.5m). This would form significant discretionary expenditure at a time that the Council is facing significant financial pressures.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. None at this stage.

9. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP HEAD OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE & MONITORING OFFICER

- 9.1. The democratic and governance implications are set out within previous reports to Planning Committee on this subject.

10. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

10.1 None

11. HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT

11.1. None

12. PROPERTY & ESTATES IMPACT

12.1. None

13. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) / SOCIAL VALUE

13.1. None

14. CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT/SOCIAL VALUE

14.1. Carrying out the works would result in additional carbon emissions over the course of the physical works on site.

15. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

15.1. None

16. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT

16.1. None

17. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

17.1. n/a

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Planning Committee agenda May 2021, December 2021, May 2022 and February 2023.