

Chichester Observer 24 Dec 15 Letters:

Hidden agenda

CHICHESTER Observer (10/12) asks 'Why are we being kept in the dark over [the] A27?' Why indeed?

The idea of a northern bypass was firmly rejected in the 1990s and again in 2004, and the protected status of the so-called Daffodil Field – which would be completely violated by this northern scheme – was reaffirmed only very recently.

So what hidden agenda lies behind this resurrection of a planning idea so devastating in its potential destruction of the local landscape, ecology and economy as to constitute a wanton vandalism utterly at odds with the character and quality of the city,

twinned as it is with Chartres and Ravenna?

Running along the narrow corridor between the southern edge of the South Downs National Park and the northernmost boundary of Chichester, a northern bypass would be a disaster for all residents of the city.

Concerned only with shifting traffic across the county, the projected scheme would do nothing to improve the flow of local traffic on either a north-south or east-west axis.

And if the most recent rumour of a major roundabout in the Daffodil Field is to be believed, the scheme would markedly increase traffic congestion and pollution levels at a key point of northern entry to, and exit from, the city.

This is not a matter of northern nimby-ism.

Every pound spent on a northern bypass is a pound which cannot be spent on the sort of improvements to the existing southern bypass which are so sorely needed.

With councils facing tighter budgets, in years to come how could Chichester

and WSCC hope to match the sums being talked of with regard to the northern scheme (£350,000,000 has been cited) with the level of funds needed to maintain the current unsatisfactory state of affairs south of the city – let alone bring improvements?

It is bad enough that, trapping Chichester in a ring of roads, the projected northern scheme would serve to ruin one of the finest landscapes of southern England, long associated with such key figures of our cultural heritage as Blake, Turner and Ivon Hitchens; bad enough that it would serve to ruin the unique institution that is Goodwood, with all its world-famous events which contribute so much to the local economy.

But that all such destruction would serve primarily to diminish the overall infrastructure and character of Chichester and its precious environs, south, north, and all points in between – this, surely, is why the current secrecy surrounding the resurrection of a very,

very bad idea needs dispelling asap.

Louise Goldsmith, head of WSCC, and Andrew Tyrie, MP: please start talking to us – now.

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