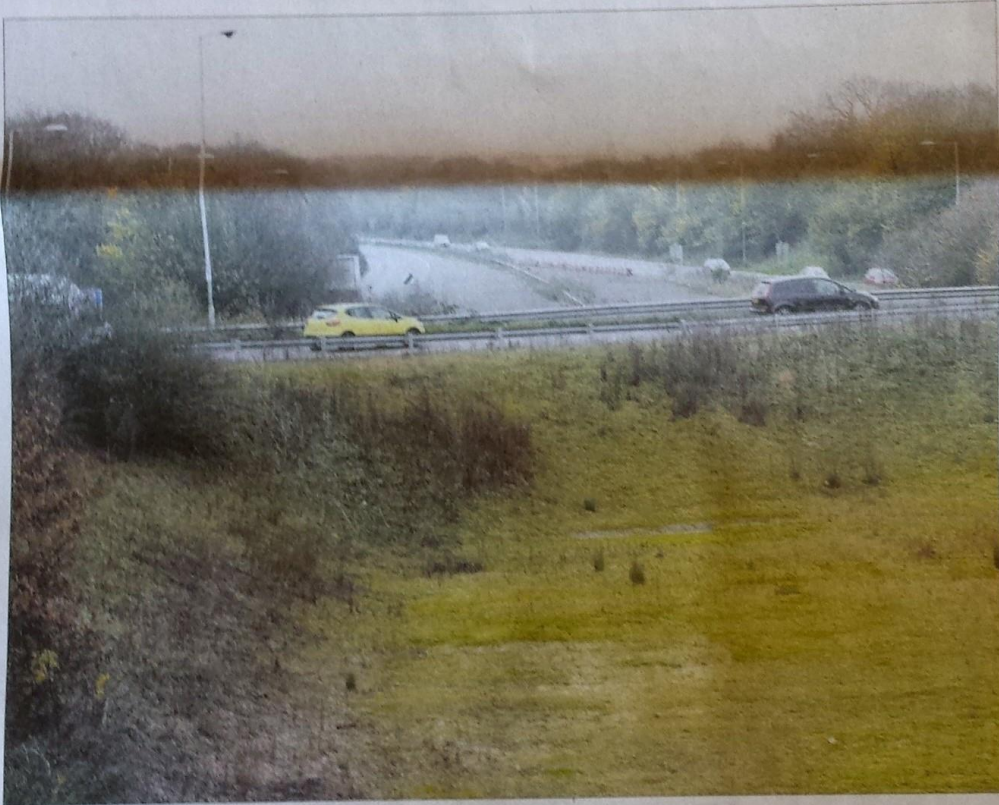


Fears new road would be 'hugely damaging to unspoilt countryside'



OPPOSITION to plans for a new Arundel bypass fear that the road would destroy countryside around the town.

Arundel Bypass Neighbourhood Committee said in a statement this week: "The roads announcement implies consultation about online alternatives to an Arundel bypass – or does it?"

"The Government's Roads Programme announcement of 1 December contains an important ambiguity. While proposing a bypass at Arundel, it says 'the starting point will be the previous

Preferred Route, subject to consultation with the National Park Authority, local government and the public on this, and alternative options' (Road Investment Strategy, p. 21).

"If the 'alternative options' include alternatives to a bypass, this is very good news.

"If the 'alternative options' just mean alternative offline bypass options, the Arundel Bypass Neighbourhood Committee suggests the government should think again,

"Consultation about online options is essential because all the offline bypass options are so damaging.

"ABNC have been campaigning against the Study's Option B through Binsted and Walberton, suggested in August. "Option B would destroy homes and businesses, and ruin two beautiful villages.

"The Study's other option, Option A (the old Pink/Blue route), was cancelled in 2003 because of the environmental damage it would cause. That damage is now greater, since Tortington Common's ancient woodland, part of Option A's route, continues to be restored, and is now within the South Downs National Park.

"People in Arun District may not realise that the Arundel bypass is in fact the only scheme in the whole Road Investment Strategy for England which is a major, hugely damaging dual carriageway through unspoiled countryside.

"All the other schemes listed are widening of existing major roads and motorways and junctions

improvements. This includes the plans for Worthing and Lancing ('improvements to the capacity of the road and junctions...including the option of full dualling', Road Investment Strategy, p. 21).

"This exception can and should be modified, at least by allowing online options into the public consultation.

"Since 'offline' options at Worthing have all been abandoned, this is one more reason not to build an offline bypass at Arundel.

"As Bill Treves, a resident of Binsted, said: 'Any attempt to dual the Arundel section of the A27 would simply release the traffic flow more quickly eastwards, where it will come up against the barrier of West Worthing and cause yet more congestion at that point.

"To invest £200 million in a bypass that merely shunts the problem along the road by 6 or 7 miles must therefore be considered a terrible waste of all our money.

"ABNC will continue to argue the case against very damaging offline bypasses, and press for open

discussion of all the options.

"See www.arundelneighbourhood.com for more on the issue."

Meanwhile, the South Downs National Park Authority's director of strategy Andrew Lee said: "There are strong protagonists for and against these proposals and it is for the Government to take a view on whether, taking into account all social, environmental and economic factors, any or all of the schemes should go ahead.

"In doing this the potential impacts upon the special qualities of the South Downs National Park are a crucial issue and are our primary concern.

"The SDNPA will therefore be looking for evidence in any route options that may be brought forward in future that there are no other more sustainable transport measures which would have a lesser negative impact; robust data on the nature and scale of the impacts on the National Park that would arise; and detail on how they would be mitigated or compensated for, bearing in mind that this is a nationally designated landscape."

Friends of the Earth have hit out at the bypass plans.

Responding to the Government's announcement of more than 80 new road schemes, Friends of the Earth senior campaigner Jane Thomas said: "Once again UK transport policy is heading in the wrong direction.

"This is yet more out-of-date thinking by the Government - tackling congestion by building or widening roads was discredited decades ago."

On the proposals in the South East region, Brenda Pollack, Friends of the Earth south east campaigner said: "Many of the schemes announced today in Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Kent, Sussex and Surrey will increase road capacity and lead to more traffic and air pollution.

"Investment in transport is urgently needed, but the priority must be better trains, buses and cycling facilities, not an expensive road-building programme that will make it harder to tackle climate change.

"Smart motorways' seems to be shorthand for more lanes which will soon fill up if the Government does not invest in alternative solutions."

Pictured: The A27 at Crossbush, Arundel
PHOTO: Derek Martin