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10<sup>th</sup> February 2022

Dear Sir,

### Arundel Bypass Grey Route Consultation

I am writing to provide feedback on the proposed Grey Route alternative as recently consulted in Arundel and surrounding villages.

### Critique

I am a long term (55 years) inhabitant of the area, user of the local road network and a supporter of the need to improve the traffic situation. However, my up-front comment is that this a very poor alternative and should be rejected. I give some reasons below:

- A very large expenditure (400-500 Million Pounds) building a length of dual carriageway much longer than is really necessary.
- A waste of the investment of public money in the existing A27 dual carriageway from Fontwell to Arundel
- Poor highway engineering – substandard alignment (for trunk roads) requiring a 50mph speed limit over the western half.
- A high likelihood of rat running across the route (N-S) leading to increased traffic flows in surrounding villages, especially Walberton, for which mitigation would be almost impossible and will add more cost.
- Deleterious consequences (with associated extra costs to mitigate) on the environment of the surrounding countryside and the villages and roads of Crossbush, Arundel, Walberton, Binsted, Fontwell, Tortington, Slindon, etc
- The effect on a very rare (possibly the rarest) mammal which is not studied or understood right now – The Alcathe bat.

### History

Before discussing a better alternative, I will indulge in a historical discussion as to how this dreadful alternative came into being. As a retired Highway Engineer and experienced Project/Programme Manager I can say it represents an application of a great deal of time, money and ingenuity in giving an answer to the wrong question.

In the beginning (late 80s) the problem at Arundel was identified. The immediate assumption was that a by-pass was required. Subsequent consultations have been focussed on this question instead of asking what could done to improve the situation around Arundel.

As a member of Walberton Parish Council during the 1992 consultation exercise we were asked to comment on bypass alternatives (I emphasise not the correct question) and we proposed the blue/pink route, which was adopted at the time. That route, and many others have been discussed widely and the views on them are subject to vested interests of all the locales affected by the various alternatives. None of the alternatives gained support.

Meantime the South Downs National Park has come into being, carrying with it the presumption that development is not encouraged. *Not forbidden, or prevented absolutely*. This presumption on no development together with the vested interest views on the other routes has led to the proposal of the Grey route, The Grey route is less popular than any of the aforementioned alternatives and the most expensive, and subject to the criticisms listed in the Critique above.

After some 30 years of thinking and God knows how much money spent we now have a proposal that does not work on various levels.

It is well understood that costs, wasted time, environmental and other project difficulties are driven by the decisions taken at the beginning of the project i.e by trying to make a poor strategic choice work. This is a case in point. So, to an alternative/better solution.

### A better solution

A better answer, now as then, and which we were discouraged from discussing in 1992, is to simply carry the existing dual carriageway down A27 hospital hill taking off at a high level over the existing road network and crossing the Arun adjacent to the existing bridge. The new bridge would be close to the level of the current bridge and could drop down to surface level (subject to Geotech considerations before rising again to cross the Arun Valley railway and running up to the Crossbush junction.

This approach has been popular in the minds and discussion of many members of the public and arises again, because it is the right and obvious solution.

It can be signed as a through route and traffic encouraged to access the local network at Fontwell using the existing roundabouts and Crossbush using the new Lyminster bypass and existing road down to Arundel station. The local network would remain untouched and would be used more easily by local traffic and pedestrians and cyclists. More savings accrue compared to the Grey route.

Having walked the site, I believe that there is sufficient width in the corridor from the existing dual carriageway in the vicinity of the arboretum right down to Ford road roundabout, and if not, an Urban clearway design standard (as for example at Sompting) could be used, thus reducing the width of land needed. The trace could be narrower still if the new carriageway were placed between retaining walls and avoiding batter slopes. 50mph speed in the area might result but would be the same as the West end of the Grey route (and Sompting) and journey time savings would still be substantial.

The hill down to Ford Road roundabout is at such a gradient that the springing point (abutment) for a bridge could be placed some way to the west of the trout hatchery and therefore not interfere with its entrance. There is also space in the land at the north of Ford Road for intermediate support.

Moreover, the abutment would also be a long way east of Jarvis Road and the Arundel Cottage Hospital entrance. Jarvis Road may have to be closed or could have acceleration/deceleration lanes built at the main road junction. The junction with Canada road could be closed to remove a rat-running possibility. Arundel Cottage Hospital, on the north side of the existing road, does not take emergency traffic, and so access/egress via manoeuvres at Fontwell or Crossbush roundabout should not be problematic for visitors.

This solution would use infrastructure already paid for in the A27 from Fontwell, and avoid the huge costs in mitigation measures for village roads and the environment. It would also leave the existing network almost completely untouched.

The proposal is not likely to gain universal support. Some points do not fare well compared to an off-line solution. It is as well to consider them here:

Canada Road Housing - If the houses, whose back gardens lead down to a fenceline some distance from the existing road, represent a noise concern they could be triple glazed or even purchased and demolished. A single inconvenience to a small number of people and the resultant cost would be much less than that of the Grey Route.

Visual Intrusion – a new bridge would straddle the Ford Roundabout area and would be seen by some of the local Ford Road inhabitants. However, from the Torton Hill estate, Arundel Town and Fitzalan Road it would not be significant as the level of the new bridge would be much the same as the existing A27 bridge. Some property owners adjacent to the bridge on Fitzalan Road may claim property blight.

Noise – traffic noise would be less than a do-nothing solution because the traffic would be at steady speed through the area and not accelerating or braking at the roundabouts it currently has to negotiate.

Solving these issues would cost much less than the money spent on mitigation for the Grey route, and would result in a better Benefit/Cost ratio.

Moreover, they would affect many fewer people, and be less damaging to the natural environment and local villages. This sort of scheme would also remove the majority (all?) of the complaints related to rat running, environment, village life etc.

I personally, and many others I have spoken to during this most recent consultation exercise, have not seen any detailed evidence that this option has been considered. A detailed consideration of this option compared to the Grey route will be required as part of your DCO submission, and cannot remain from public view.

If such a comparison of this option has not been considered, then you are in default of the requirements placed upon you to show that you have considered all options if finding that the Grey route is the best. This sounds like very fertile ground for a Judicial review challenge by the local populace.

## Planning

At the consultation events I was informed that this is a Nationally Strategic Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and will be viewed by both the Planning Inspectorate (PI) and Secretary of State (SoS). As the scheme will be part of the national trunk road network, the PI and SOS must surely consider the project from a National Strategic perspective

So, to the planning considerations for such the scheme. This Grey route will surely not get built. The scheme only attracted 7% support first time around, and the public outcry given the problems listed above coupled with the huge cost, will embolden opposition.

Consequently, a careful balance must be struck by the PI and SoS which is not simply try to referee the views of the SDNP and all the local villages and environment. I outline a possible high-level analysis below:

- Do-nothing Option - minimum cost, maximum disruption to users of the existing network, both trunk road and local traffic, and with ever increasing traffic crawling up and down hospital hill i.e. continuing high traffic volumes in the SDNP. Great for the environment around the villages, but likely to encourage further rat running over time as people seek their own solutions to queueing.
- Build the Grey route in the teeth of a range of opposition and large costs. Folly on a local level as it causes maximum disruption/and discomfort to all the villages and local environment. Folly on a

strategic level as the money wasted would be better spent on the levelling up agenda, or other public necessity.

- Build the on-line route as proposed in this feedback. The volume of traffic using the short section of road in the SDNP would not be greater than the Do-nothing Option. The cost to the taxpayer would be considerably less, as would disruption to life in all the small villages mentioned in the Critique. Their surrounding environment would also suffer much less harm.

Given that do nothing seems untenable, the argument appears to be a balance between protecting a small corner of the SDNP park by spending an extra cost (c. £150m) and at the same time introducing massive disruption and environment impact just outside of the SNDP. The views of the SDNP must not prevail unchallenged. Surely the presumption against development in the national park legislation was not designed to justify such the poor design and consequent poor outcome represented by the Grey Route?

Yours Faithfully

P S M Ansell

Copies to

Planning Inspectorate  
Highways England  
Under Secretary of State – Roads  
Secretary of State for Transport