

Transport Action Network

Response to:

Highways England's

Additional Consultation on A27 Arundel Bypass

Response to Additional Consultation

While it is welcome that Highways England has publicly admitted to making more mistakes in the documents it published during last year's A27 Arundel Bypass further consultation, the current four-week consultation is not long, or open, enough to address the fact that people were misled when making their original choice of route. This is unacceptable.

Highways England, needs to carry out a thorough review of all materials and documentation associated with the further consultation it held in 2019 and after correcting additional issues, such as misleading imagery, it should rerun the full 12 week consultation. Only by doing this will people be able to properly assess the information before them and not have their opinion swayed by misleading evidence.

The problem with the current additional consultation is that the errors are presented in a manner that is confusing and difficult to comprehend. They require a lot of cross-referencing to see their full context. The errors highlighted also only relate back to the already corrected documents and not the original documents published which contained even more errors. In addition, there are errors and misleading information within the latest documentation that are yet to be corrected.

With so much inaccurate information in the public domain, which undoubtedly will have influenced people's responses, a fresh start is needed to give the public clear and unambiguous information to enable them to come to an informed opinion. The current 4-week consultation is not only too short, with its difficult to comprehend information, but it has also been conducted in a vacuum. Many respondents to the 2019 consultation have not

been notified of the errors, or told that there is a new consultation. Therefore, the safest and fairest solution is to rerun the whole process.

We are also concerned that Highways England is discouraging people from responding to this latest consultation by saying that these errors do not change its conclusions. People will think why bother when it will make no difference, or the errors must be so slight as to be insignificant. Yet this is not the case, for example, changes in the amount of ancient woodland that would be affected by the two near online routes, cyan and beige, has been reduced by nearly 3 hectares, or by nearly 40% for the beige route. At the same time the documentation admits that the offline routes would also have an impact on heritage assets in Arundel, where none was recorded before. These are substantial changes and could significantly alter people's choice of route if they knew about them.

Overall, it is disappointing that Highways England, a well-funded government organisation, could not get its facts straight during the last public consultation and has now compounded the problem with its half-baked additional consultation process which is equally flawed. Consequently, the consultation that it ran last year, cannot stand if natural justice is to prevail, even allowing for any responses it might get from this latest consultation.

It is worth noting that this is the third attempt that Highways England has tried and failed to get things right. If you count the fact that it had to reissue the documentation a few weeks into the further consultation last year due to errors, it's on its fourth attempt at running this process. It's simply not fit for purpose.

The only fair way to rectify the current predicament is to rerun the full 12 week consultation with a completely new set of properly scrutinised and corrected documents and wide ranging publicity so that people are aware of what's going on. Anything less will leave the results in doubt and Highways England's position open to challenge.

25 February 2020

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Transport Action Network provides free support to people and groups pressing for more sustainable transport in their area and opposing cuts to bus services, damaging road schemes and large unsustainable developments

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