

January 2017 - letters to Worthing Herald

Dear Sir,

Highways England (HE) acknowledge that they have not considered or costed a Worthing bypass that utilises the route of the A280/A24/A283 (Northern Bypass). So how much would it cost? Some have suggested 1 billion pounds.

HE published estimated costs for the options it has considered. 1.3 billion pounds to build tunnels alongside and bypassing sections of the A27 through Worthing and Lancing. Up to 950 million pounds to build a combination of tunnels, dual carriageways and a bypass involving Church Lane Sompting. About 100 million pounds to convert all the single carriageways to dual carriageways and alter 6 junctions (this does not include the cost of purchasing land or properties).

The Okehampton bypass through the Dartmoor National Park cost approximately 20 million pounds in 1986 (about 40 million pounds in today's money). It is 5.4 miles long (some of it in a cutting) and there are bridges.

Guideline costing for the construction of a new rural dual carriageway in the UK and USA is 3-5 million pounds per mile (not including land purchase).

The Northern Bypass is approximately 18.5 miles long and there are about 5 junctions along its route. There would also be alterations to its accesses at the Shoreham flyover and Patching/Clapham (particular sensitive involvement of these communities is very important). Most of the land used for upgrading the roads is agricultural.

Readers, you do the maths, or better still urge HE to include the Northern Bypass as an option and HE can do the costings themselves.

Then residents and businesses in Adur, Worthing and the SDNP can have a real debate about their future. Pursuing the cheapest option (fools' gold) is rarely the best long term sustainable option.

Martyn Hinchcliffe.

Jan 2017

Sir,

We are led to believe that a Worthing bypass utilising the route of the A280/A24/A283 (Northern Bypass) can not be considered because it violates the South Downs National Park (SDNP). Indeed, it is Government policy that there shouldn't be any new roads or road upgrades within national parks unless there are no other reasonable alternatives.

Interestingly, in the 1970/80s there was a similar conundrum concerning the bypassing of Okehampton in Devon to facilitate traffic flow along the A30. The Inspector concluded that a bypass through the Dartmoor National Park (DNP) was the best option. During the process, the Inspector indicated that no option should be set in stone and no ideas should be dismissed. The Okehampton bypass was built in 1986 when Sir Peter Bottomley was Minister for roads and traffic.

So why hasn't Highways England (HE) considered and costed a Northern Bypass?

Is it because the roads are under the jurisdiction of the West Sussex County Council (WSCC)?

Is it because the Inspectors report for the proposed Worthing bypass in the mid 1990s dismissed the idea of a Northern Bypass because it went through an area of outstanding natural beauty (as did most of the other options)? This was an opportunity missed. The A27 Worthing/ Lancing Improvement Scheme was withdrawn for two important reasons; it was expensive and the cost meant it could not be constructed for many years. There was also a lack of broad consensus on the appropriate route. If the Northern Bypass had been seriously considered, consensus may have been found and the cost would have been much less than the alternatives.

Was it a fear that its inclusion would extend the consultation process? A fear that funding could be withdrawn.

We do not know the real answer to this question. The reasons given by HE at the Pavillion Theatre meeting were lacking in detail and conviction (especially, as they must have been aware of the desire for a bypass by those who would attend).

A representative of the SDNP has made it clear that their committee has not given formal consideration to a Northern Bypass.

Our MPs could ask the Secretary of State for Transport to transfer the control of the A280 and A283 to HE. The 'bypassed section' of the A27 could be transferred to the control of WSCC (which would give them control of the traffic lights at the Grove Lodge roundabout).

Once the Northern Bypass option was adopted by HE, the SDNP would then have a mandate to formally consider this option.

Martyn Hinchcliffe.

Chairman of Offington Park Resident's Association