

Jane Noble, Forum Officer
West Sussex Local Access Forum
First Floor, Northleigh
Tower Street, Chichester
West Sussex PO19 1RH
(03302) 226691
wslaf@westsussex.gov.uk

www.wslaf.org

West Sussex Local Access Forum



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Sent by email to: A27ArundelBypass@highwaysengland.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam

A27 Arundel Bypass - Consultation

I am responding to the above consultations on behalf of West Sussex Local Access Forum (WSLAF).

West Sussex Local Access Forum (WSLAF) is an independent advisory body, established under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to give access advice to local authorities, statutory organisations and non-government organisations. In giving that advice the Forum's main objective is to ensure the existing network of public rights of way (PRoWs), as well as the wider access network, is protected and where possible enhanced. The Forum has a balanced membership of knowledgeable and experienced users (walkers, cyclists, horse riders and carriage drivers), landowners and other interests (including conservation, disabled access, landscape). For further information about the Forum please visit www.wslaf.org.

The Forum's response to the 2017 consultation on the Arundel Bypass Scheme advised that Members consider the existing A27 is a significant north-south barrier to non-motorised users (NMUs) trying to safely access either the South Downs National Park (SDNP), or the Coastal Plain (CP), and our views **have**s **have**s not changed. Crossing a busy dual carriageway at grade is an unattractive and dangerous prospect for those seeking quiet countryside leisure and recreation, or a visit to the beach, whether walking, cycling or horse riding, and the importance of these activities for mental health and well-being should not be underestimated.

West Sussex County Council's [Rights of Way Management Plan \(2018-2028\)](#) and Arun District Council's Local Plan recognise the lack of NMu routes in the coastal plain (CP), especially bridleways (multi-use routes), and the need to improve and provide safe access to the excellent network of routes north of the A27 in the SDNP for all vulnerable road users. Members remain firmly of the opinion that this Scheme, whichever Option is chosen as the preferred route, must identify and provide significant benefits for all NMUs. NMUs must be encouraged to leave their cars/horseboxes at home, but in order to do this facilities provided must be easy to access and use, follow a natural desire line, and be enjoyable.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires planning policies and decisions to protect and enhance PRoW and access, and protect ancient woodland. Members have expressed concerns that the removal of ancient woodland and the blighting of countryside by large scale road developments would damage the amenity of high quality walking, cycling and horse riding countryside in the area.

The Forum will not be commenting in detail at this stage on all possible NMU improvements to the six options currently under consideration. However, when a 'Preferred route' has been chosen we definitely wish to be involved in providing specific comment and advice on NMU improvements.

We note that Highways England (HE) acknowledges NMU facilities on the existing A27 to be poor (Interim Scheme Assessment report Para 8.9.13) but it is recognised that a number of opportunities for the provision of additional NMU facilities as part of de-trunking of the A27 have been identified. While this recognition is welcomed there are concerns that as these improvements would be 'separately funded' this might result in a delay to their provision.

In the Scheme booklet (page 11) the final paragraph states that 'access would be maintained for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders'. Whilst this aim is supported, 'maintaining' is not improving, and that should be the overall aim. Whilst Members who have attended exhibitions and talked to Officers have generally found that HE has given consideration to the issues around PRow and NMUs, there are concerns as to whether this will result in any meaningful improvements.

As a basic minimum the Forum considers that, whether the A27 is de-trunked or not, at least two safe bridleway crossings should be provided (location and design to be agreed in discussion with local organisations). These crossings should be suitable and accessible to all NMUs and should incorporate links to existing or new multi-user routes on the CP and to the north. This will allow NMUs to use routes away from local roads which are becoming increasingly busy and unsafe, due to the increasing development on the CP.

On the north side of the A27 from Ford Road a 3m, or preferably 4m, NMU route (bridleway) should be provided to link all the cul-de-sac PRow which are currently severed or terminate at the A27 into the SDNP. This will enable NMUs to enjoy circular routes of varying distances in the area.

This letter constitutes formal advice from the West Sussex Local Access Forum. Highways England is required, in accordance with section 94(5) of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to relevant advice from this Local Access Forum in carrying out its functions.

The Forum looks forward to being updated on progress on the Scheme, and to future involvement regarding NMU matters when a 'preferred route' has been chosen.

Yours sincerely



Jane Noble, Forum Officer
West Sussex Local Access Forum

Copy for information to: All WSLAF members