

15th September 2017

A27 Consultation: Our response to the Highways England A27 proposal (Worthing to Lancing section).

THE CHAMBER'S PUBLIC STATEMENT

The Worthing & Adur Chamber of Commerce formally represents almost 350 member businesses who between them employ thousands of people. All are affected to one degree or another by the fact that the A27 through Lancing and Worthing is not fit for purpose.

To improve the scheme would have a cost implication and would certainly take the scheme well outside of the £50 - £100 million budget allowed for. However, the Chamber is concerned that the basis on which that budget was decided does not take enough account of the importance of securing a long-term economic solution either for the region or for a town of around 108,000 which, according to Government statistics, is also the most densely populated local authority area in East or West Sussex.

Amongst other things the shortcomings of this section of road mean:

- Productivity in Worthing and Adur is lower than it should be because journey times are unpredictable and often extended
- The road isn't fit for purpose both failing as a trunk route and causing congestion within the towns
- Economic growth is stifled. Businesses are less ready to invest in this region because the road has such a bad reputation
- Businesses relocate away from the area to avoid the worst of these problems
- Pollution is higher than it should be because of standing traffic
- Road safety is compromised with a higher than average accident rate

Quoting the principles set out by Highways England, our ambition for this stretch of road is also that it is:

- Free flowing – where routine delays are infrequent and journeys are reliable
- Safe and serviceable – where no-one should be harmed when travelling or working
- Accessible and integrated – so people are free to choose their mode of transport and can move safely across and alongside our roads

And that any work to the road between Worthing and Lancing:

- Supports economic growth with a modern and reliable road network that reduces delays, creates jobs, helps business and opens up new areas for development
- Ensures our activities result in a long term and sustainable benefit to the environment

THE CHAMBER'S SOLUTION

The Chamber therefore thinks that the Government, led by the Department for Transport, should reconsider the Benefit to Cost Ratio model (BCR) they have used to establish a budget which in this instance fails to provide a rational outcome.

In so doing, we hope that we can depend on the Government for enough funding to allow Highways England to put forward a revised scheme which will provide a long-term solution to a road which is a key component in the success or failure of the local economy, as well as being a section of road that is an important part of the only east-west trunk road south of the M25 and therefore of significance to the economy as a whole, and all the more so in a post Brexit world where productivity and infrastructure are going to be the key to UK competitiveness.

This revised solution should include grade separation at Grove Lodge, Durrington Cemetery and Lyons Farm and should also take into account changes needed to accommodate the New Monks Farm development, which would also include, no doubt, a proportionate contribution from the developer.

Whilst we understand that the Government wants to limit expenditure as part of its austerity programme, the present scheme will cost £69 million and achieve little, which is not good value to the taxpayer. Investing in a scheme that will provide a long-term solution will mean that a problem that has been a blight to this area for over four decades can finally be put to bed, thereby unlocking economic growth in the local and wider area and providing long term value to the taxpayer. In addition, we would hope that a revised scheme will improve road safety and cut down on the pollution which is a consequence of the standing traffic which blights the route on a daily basis.

We look forward to a positive dialogue with HM Government and Highways England to take a revised scheme forward.

Chris Coopey

Chris Coopey
President Worthing and Adur Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber surveyed its members and business associates to gain support for this statement and the results are below:

To date 14th September (final to be calculated for HE on 15th September)

131 responses

97.7% supported the statement

4351 employees represented