

A27 Arundel Bypass Planning Policy and Compliance with NN NPS Summary

Introduction

This summary describes the planning context in which the A27 Arundel Bypass scheme would be assessed, and what we must do to obtain consent to deliver the project.

What is the Government's vision for the national transport network?

The National Policy Statement for National Networks (NPSNN) establishes Government policy on the need for development of the national transport network, and sets criteria to assess and evaluate the planning merits of such transport projects.

The NPSNN states that the Government will deliver national transport networks that meet the country's long-term needs, supporting a prosperous and competitive economy and improving overall quality of life, as part of a wider transport system. This means creating road networks which:

- have the capacity, connectivity and resilience to support growth and create jobs
- support and improve journey quality, reliability and safety
- help meet environmental goals and the move to a low carbon economy
- join up our communities.

The Road Investment Strategy (2015) specifies the need for a number of major projects – including the A27 Arundel Bypass – to upgrade and improve England's strategic road network so that it can deliver the performance needed to support the nation in the 21st century.

What are Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)?

If a highway improvement project is of a certain scale and significance, it is designated as a NSIP, according to the Planning Act 2008.

The A27 Arundel Bypass scheme is designated a NSIP because of its scale (size), irrespective of the option taken forward. An NSIP can only be delivered if it has received planning consent through a Development Consent Order (DCO) from the Secretary of State for Transport, after examination by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). A DCO is a comprehensive type of planning permission combined with powers necessary to develop complex infrastructure schemes, such as those required to compulsorily purchase land.

A key feature of a DCO application is that it is mandatory for the promoter (ie. us, Highways England) to have regard to pre-application consultation undertaken in accordance with a published Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC). We plan to publish this in spring 2018 and then there will be a further round of statutory consultation in spring 2018 on the preferred route for the scheme.

Following the statutory consultation, we will then prepare and lodge the DCO planning application with the PINS. Inspectors will carry out a six-month public examination, where they hear evidence from a range of sources to inform their recommendation report.

The final decision on the scheme will be made by the Secretary of State for Transport, who will take into account the following factors:

- National planning policy – principally the policies contained in the National Policy Statement for National Networks (NPSNN).
- The impacts and benefits of the scheme (which might include local impacts and local policy matters).
- Legal and international obligations.

More information on the planning process and opportunities to be involved is available from the Planning Inspectorate at:

www.infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk

The scheme cannot be built without consent from the Secretary of State for Transport.

What are the National Planning Policy Statement Issues for Arundel?

The A27 Arundel Bypass project helps deliver NPSNN objectives for economic performance, safety and sustainable transport. However, the NPSNN also sets out the Government's policy on protecting special features that may be harmed by the scheme. These are set out below:

National Parks

Policies 5.150 – 5.151 state that “great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in nationally designated areas. National Parks, the Broads and areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.”

These policies also state that for projects in national parks: *“the Secretary of State should refuse development consent in these areas except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that it is in the public interest.”* When considering whether a proposal is in the public interest the Secretary of State for Transport will consider the need for the development, the cost of possible alternatives and the extent to which detrimental impacts on the environment can be moderated.

Policies 5.154 - 5.155 state that projects outside of national parks should aim to *“avoid compromising the purposes of designation and ... be designed sensitively given the various siting, operational, and other relevant constraints.”*

Ancient Woodland

Policy 5.32 states that the Secretary of State for Transport *“should not grant development consent for any development that would result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats including ancient woodland”* and requires that *“the need for and benefits of the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.”*

Whereas other forms of environmental feature can be compensated by providing a comparable replacement nearby (for example, flood plain land), direct loss of ancient woodland cannot be mitigated since its quality is due to its age. However, the practice is to offset the loss of “ancient woodland” by providing additional woodland in the local area and this would be many times greater than the area lost by a particular option. The amount and location of this additional woodland would be the subject of discussion with the local authorities and Natural England and this would be subject to formal consultation.

As set out in the consultation brochure, all 3 options would result in the loss of some ancient woodland.

If you need help accessing this or any other Highways England information, please call **0300 123 5000** and we will help you.

Nationally designated heritage assets

Policy 5.133 states *“where the proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset, the Secretary of State should refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or loss of significance is necessary.”*

Building near to heritage assets affects their setting, which in some cases can cause substantial harm to the asset.

As set out in the consultation brochure, all 3 options would affect a number of listed buildings, and in the case of Options 3 and 5A, a scheduled monument.