

Build a Better A27 Workshop - Monday 25th September 2017 – Chichester Assembly Rooms

Ash opened the workshop and welcomed everyone. He summarised the process we have followed so far.

He explained that the aim of the evening was to look at how we crystallise what we've learnt, into some guidance to feed back to Highways England in the next few days.

Ash went on to welcome Gillian Keegan MP and thanked her for her hard work and support of this process since her election in June.

He reverted back to the guiding principles as a reminder, as well as encouraging those who hadn't yet done so, to sign the pledge board. He explained that those guiding principles that were green, had been done, leaving the three not coloured, as our focus for the evening.

He reminded the group that the reason for the lack of success of the original process was a lack of community consensus. He then handed over to Gillian for an update and Q&A.

Gillian reminded the group of her involvement and action to date, right up to the latest letter she has received from Highways England (HE) and shared with the group. She explained that she had taken a further call today to clarify some additional questions. She confirmed that we had not been successful in getting more time for the community to come up with new scheme, but did point out that the group had come a long way. The RIS structure is new and has historically been applied to utilities, and only recently to roads. She went on to explain how the process works and how it will enable Highways England to plan future schemes more effectively.

RIS1 – The Chichester scheme was in RIS1 as Option 2a but was cancelled due to lack of community consensus in the consultation. Highways England are still keen to progress the scheme as it is clear that there are road issues in the Chichester area that need resolving. Although HE agreed that the scheme could be un-cancelled, to get back in to RIS1 we will need to agree on a preferred route in a very short timescale. The processes are fixed term (5 years) and RIS1 started in 2015, the scheme would therefore need to be started by 2020. Gillian asked why the Arundel Scheme had until January – the answer from HE was that it is because it is a far simpler scheme. If a scheme was agreed and the route announced HE would then go into discussion with us over mitigations within that route, taking into account things such as environmental factors (2020-2024).

RIS2 – this is not yet open and no fixed budget will be determined until the Autumn Statement. HE is hoping the budget will be in line with RIS1. The spade in the ground would be some time in 2023, to finish 2027. RIS2 will open in approximately a year from now, and close in around 18 months from now. If we

want to have a shot at this we would need to have a proposed scheme by Easter 2018. Budget constraints feed into the cost benefits ratio (CBR) and there is a set threshold. The Chichester scheme CBR is currently 2.7% on the existing option 2. The RIS2 process will be tough competition.

We need to get HE working closely with us in order for this to be successful. The next phase is the development consent order (DCO) and would see further work on mitigations. RIS2 risks budget constraints but gives us more time. However, the outcome is not guaranteed.

Gillian raised the northern route with Highways England and asked why it was written off. Before the RIS1 process was put in place, back in 2013, there was a range of options considered. To satisfy the DCO extensive work on a range of options and considerations is needed. The budget for the Chichester scheme started at £120m. The budget range they had then, was £329m to £600m. They wrote off the options that were deemed out of scope based on BCR and other factors. Did they quantify the BCR of the £329m? Yes, but it went down considerably when considering the northern routes. They thought it would take them over budget, and open to a huge amount of planning problems.

When asking why Arundel weren't having the same issues as Chichester regarding National Park, Highways England stated that the whole of Arundel is in the National Park!

Gillian feels that HE do want to do the scheme, within the £250m budget.

Question on CBR's – For Option 2, the BCR is 2.7 but there is a long list of mitigations needed by WSCC/CDC. Will the mitigations reduce the CBR when they are factored in? If so, why isn't the analysis undertaken sooner in the process?

Gillian has followed up with Highways England to ask if they would respond to the CDC response – she has heard back to say that yes they would, and it would increase the cost of the scheme and therefore would have to come out of another budget.

Flyovers are not popular, and the community feels that underpasses would be preferred. How are we going to engage with Highways England to consider the mitigations? Gillian reminded the group about the aim of the evening – to simply discuss and agree what option we collectively agree that we would like the County and District Council to respond to HE with.

If we take RIS1, Highways England would need to put their preferred route down which would be 2a. The project has a 15-year lifespan, will take 4 years to build and will save 4 minutes of travel. Highways England is going to respond to that assumption.

Why haven't the integrated transport plan and housing plan been considered? Gillian stated that Highways England would work with us to consider those factors once there is an agreed route.

Given that HE says the northern route has almost 100% no chance of success, if we decide to let RIS1 go and sign up to RIS2, will we still be looking at online options only? And if so, why would we not take the money now (RIS1)? Based on current data and available budget most likely yes. However, it is clear that the current options are unlikely to be accepted by the community.

Was future growth / housing projection factored in? Yes it was.

There was a request for Gillian to ask Highways England to revisit the data they used and update their criteria for their analysis. The existing traffic movement and CBR don't seem to make sense in the modelling. Gillian made a note to do this.

If we went for RIS1 and Highways England put their preferred 2a route forward, is there any way of changing flyovers for underpasses? Or is it really as it sounds? Gillian feels it will be lower level mitigations that are considered, as opposed to major structural changes. How do we get Highways England's to consider some major mitigations which look like some of the other options that are not the preferred route? Gillian thinks that they are keen to build the road and can see that the growth and implementation of the other schemes around us will have an impact on our existing issues.

Sarah Sharp stated that she has come to all these events under the impression that we would, as a community, come up with a different scheme to propose to Highways England and now feels we are being forced into an option. Gillian reiterated that we only have to decide on RIS1 if we want to absolutely secure the current funding. However, we do have a chance to take RIS2.

Zoe Neal stated that the data used in RIS1 is wrong – Gillian explained that HE has used the modelling for comparability – it is not an exact science.

Gillian made it clear that wants to help the community get to and provide an informed steer to CDC and WSCC.

Gillian was asked what she had asked Highways England re a northern option? She simply asked why the northern option was removed, not if it would be re-considered.

Discussion of the RIS1 and RIS2 Options – table exercises

- Review the letters
- Review the material on the key requirements
- Summarise and focus on the pro's and con's as well as key questions
- Feedback

Feedback included but not exclusive to:

Con's:

- Feel RIS1 would be a short term solution only
- Inappropriate budgeting for RIS2
- No consensus reached in previous consultation for option 2
- RIS1 - that would be it
- RIS1 - Short term solution
- Option 2 was previously rejected and based on out of date data
- No funding guaranteed for RIS2
- Could be gridlock before RIS2 is actioned if we wait
- Elections could affect the priority of the project of RIS2
- Would need to collect a lot more data and it would take a lot more time if we go for RIS2
- Could lose the money altogether with RIS2
- Delay of process if we wait for RIS2
- No guarantee of an alternative route if we go for RIS2
- Disruption of the A27 for housing mitigation
- Can we get a better result in time if we wait?
- Unquantifiable risk around funding if we go for RIS2

Pro's:

- With RIS1 we get the money now – certainty of budget
- RIS1 is a more certain option than RIS2
- RIS1 will mean that a scheme will happen sooner
- If we wait for RIS2 – as the route is part of the strategic highway, feel confident we would get the money
- CBR is assumed to be good for RIS2
- RIS2 wouldn't be competing with Arundel/Worthing
- RIS2 would give the community a chance to finish the work it's started
- RIS2 would provide a long term sustainable solution
- RIS2 gives us time and opportunity
- RIS2 gives more potential to optimise a solution
- RIS2 will enable community consensus – community confidence – and community led option
- RIS2 could enable HE to revisit the data / use more up to date data
- RIS2 would give us time to employ an independent consultant
- RIS2 will enable opportunities to be shaped with HE
- Elections
- Innovation
- RIS2 – consider the integrated transport solution
- RIS2 - consider underpasses
- RIS2 would avoid DCO failure

There was a request for a copy of the list of the mitigations that had been submitted by CDC/WSCC in response to the consultation. The BABA27 secretariat will provide this.

Open questions:

What is the chance of selecting RIS1 and continuing community led work for a RIS2 if we then decide against the RIS1 option?

Can we get HE to re-run their analysis as their data is out of date?

What percentage weighting is the HE statement giving with regard to the northern route being "highly unlikely"?

Who will be making the proposal for submission into RIS2?

If we were to go for RIS2 would it be possible to use our £20m funding to mitigate our offer?

Would it be possible for Highways England to be present at future community meetings?

Will RIS2 be an online only option?

What will the future transport plan be?

If no scheme goes ahead, it does not take away the fact that the A27 still requires improvement.

Group steer

Ash then asked the group to give a 'steer' on the two options. The count results were RIS1 x 26 and RIS2 x 36.

Next steps

CDC will hold a Full Council Meeting on Wednesday 27th September and WSCC will hold an Environmental and Community Service Select Committee Meeting on Thursday 28th September. Both are meetings in public.

Louise Goldsmith (LG) reminded the group about why we were here and explained that we have a group of unique voices – not the same voices but we have come together collectively. She recognised that the evening had been a challenging one. LG's commitment is that we will continue to listen. The WSCC Select Committee will be held on Thursday – votes are to be made by councillors on behalf of their represented communities. Louise confirmed that work will continue on our community voice and the commitment to the group. It is the right thing to do for Chichester and LG hopes we will continue to work together.

Will CDC consider the outcome of this evening ahead of the southern gateway proposals? Diane Shepherd stated that she could not give an answer – she

confirmed that a meeting would be held in November to consider their proposals on the southern gateway.

Will there be a secondary analysis on the voting to look at where they live and therefore why they voted that way?

Jeremy Hunt stated that he supported RIS1 as it is guaranteed funding.

Jamie Fitzjohn stated that he was the first to sign the pledge and supports RIS2 because he supports democracy.

In conclusion, Ash thanked everyone for coming. He asked everyone to leave their comments for analysis. He also thanked Gillian for her input, and the BABA27 team for their continued support.

The meeting concluded at 8.28pm