

SCATE

East Sussex

July 2023

Case not made

Oxfordshire County Council's planning committee has voted to halt plans for a £300m dual carriageway with new bridges and a bypass near Didcot.

A particular focus from councillors opposing their officers' recommendation to approve was on the outdated traffic modelling data, which used figures from 2016/17. Plans for an offline dual carriageway between Lewes and Polegate are based on a business case which uses prices from 2016 and traffic data from 2017. National Highways have told SCATE East Sussex that same business case is the foundation of studies by Arup for a new scheme.

Greener ?

National Highways says it wants to make construction of the £9bn Lower Thames Crossing 'carbon neutral'. It plans to buy and store six million kilograms (6,200 tonnes) of hydrogen to fuel construction vehicles, saying this will replace around 20 million litres of diesel.

Laura Blake, chair of Thames Crossing Action Group, says "Hydrogen construction machinery is still in prototype stage, and green hydrogen is expensive and not readily available. Production of hydrogen uses a lot of electricity, and our country is already experiencing shortages. Value for money is something the examiners are already asking questions about. We don't believe such a hugely destructive and harmful project can ever be considered green, and it would still fail to meet scheme objectives.'

If the scheme obtains development consent, construction is currently due to start in 2026.

Think again !

In a farewell message, Lord Deben, chair of the Government's Climate Change advisory committee for the past ten years, has called for a halt to major road building, and a full review of what's needed to get to Net Zero.



Lord Deben, who was a Tory minister as Selwyn Gummer, said the Government should consider copying the Welsh action on road schemes. The Committee's formal recommendation to the Government reads:

“ **Conduct a systematic review of current and future road-building projects to assess their consistency with the Government's environmental goals. This should ensure that decisions do not lock in unsustainable levels of traffic growth and develop conditions (which can be included in the Roads Investment Strategy 3 process and beyond) that permit schemes to be taken forward only if they meaningfully support cost-effective delivery of Net Zero and climate adaptation.** ”

Transport for the South East told members at its June Forum meeting that it is 'refreshing' its transport strategy. It took three years to deliver the document in 2020; TfSE spent another three developing £45 billion Strategic Investment Plan. Both documents claim to be 1) in line with Net Zero targets, and 2) requiring the building of more major roads in the South East.



Highways get a big ho-hum from residents

National Highways plans for the A27 between Worthing and Lancing got a thumbs down from most local residents in a six-week consultation. 95% of those who completed Highways' questionnaire live within five miles of the road, and, in the informed opinion of the majority, the proposals aren't up to it.

586 questionnaire responses were received. 58% said Option 1 wouldn't reduce delays or improve reliability. 55% said Option 2 wouldn't cut delays, and 54% said it wouldn't make the route more reliable. 57% disagreed that Option 3 would reduce delays or improve reliability. All three options were perceived to be poor value for money.

Nonetheless the Highways machine moves on, with a preferred option announcement expected later this year, with a view to starting construction in 2025. All three options are priced at around £30m, though even National Highways describe Option 3 as poor value for money.

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