

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

Green Party
for the South East of England

Anne Sprake
Director of Planning
Government Office for the South East
Bridge House
1 Walnut Tree Close
Guildford
GU1 4GA

October 21st 2008

Dear Anne,

I am writing to outline the reasons why I support the Secretary of State calling in East Sussex County Council planning application RR/2474/CC, the **Bexhill Hastings Link Road**. This is a hugely unpopular and controversial scheme and I am not confident that public opinion has been adequately heard during the planning process. Over 2000 objections were received from local people and I also made a submission to the planning committee. Natural England, the Environment Agency and many other bodies have expressed grave concerns about the proposed road. Moreover:

1) The application conflicts with national policies, specifically a number of Planning Policy Statements (PPS). For example, PPS1 requires the integration of economic, social and environmental concerns yet the proposed scheme sidelines environmental considerations. Research¹ has shown the road is not essential for the successful regeneration of the area, so even justifying the application on economic grounds is flawed. PPS1 also includes a commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, so I am concerned by projections that the proposed road will result in an additional 6,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide being emitted each year. It is now widely acknowledged that new roads invariably lead to an increase in the amount of traffic and the Environmental Statement for the scheme showed that there would be more traffic growth with the scheme than without it. The Link Road, therefore, clearly runs contrary to UK and EU transport related emissions cuts and the government's new overall 80% by 2050 reduction target for emissions across all sectors.

PPS7 would be breached by this application, given that the road will damage the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The planning documents acknowledge that there will be an increase in traffic noise in those rural areas that the road runs through. The route will also cut off a corner of the Marline Valley SSSI and run metres away from Combe Valley SSSI.

The scheme will impact negatively on internationally protected habitats and species, including under EU law, and fail to deliver biodiversity benefits as required by PPS9.

2) Planning Policy Guidelines (PPG) also seem to have been ignored in the development of this scheme. So, for example, the Link Road and associated development at Worsham Farm would be primarily accessed by car, in conflict with both PPG 13 and the Regional Transport Strategy's aim of encouraging modal shift and a reduction in the need to travel by car. East Sussex County Council has failed to properly investigate and establish alternative transport measures as advised by Department for Transport guidance. The Council has also failed to properly allow for significant traffic impacts beyond the immediate locality, including congestion on the A259/A27.

The road will pose a risk to a number of archaeological features within Combe Haven Valley, in breach of PPG16, and to 3 Grade II listed structures, in breach of PPG15. In addition, 8 non-designated historic buildings would have to be demolished if the scheme goes ahead.

¹ Research by Alan Wenban Smith based on existing research commissioned by SEEDA.

3) The scheme has significant effects beyond the immediate locality. It will increase traffic in the wider region, creating pressure for further road building and reducing the region's ability to contribute to CO2 emissions reductions targets.

4) The costs of the development have risen from an initial estimate of £47 million in 2004, to £100 million. Given that the central government funding allocation has not increased, it is likely that tax payers will be required to meet the costs of the scheme.

5) The Link Road is a departure from the East Sussex Structural Plan, which supports the alternative A259 Bexhill and Hastings Western and Eastern Bypasses. Neither the Hastings Borough Local Plan nor the Rother Local Plan includes the link road either. As I understand it, councils are required to consult the Secretary of State over an application if it is a departure from the Local Plan, under the terms of the 1999 Town and Country Planning Directions.

I trust you will agree that there are sufficient grounds to call in this application for independent inspection and I hope that the GoSE Planning Committee will recommend this as a course of action. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Lucas'.

Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.