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For the attention of:

Neil Crass
National Transport Casework Team
Tyneside House
Skinnerburn Road
Newcastle Business Park
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE4 7AR

Ref: NATTRAN/SE/S247/3254

17th September 2021

Dear Sir,

I am writing to object to the stopping up of the road at Princes Parade.

I have lived in Hythe for nearly 30 years and value the unique aspect of Princes Parade. On one side, walking along the coastal road, the openness of the vista, the beauty of the ever-changing sea, often with views of France across the Channel, with the wilderness area offering an unusual green background with a sense of spaciousness. On the other side, the tranquillity of the canal path, sheltered from the crash of the waves, always with the sounds of the many birds that inhabit this rural area. In our built-up Southeast region, this stretch of land is truly a cherished feature of our lives.

As a local resident, I visit Princes Parade on most days. The people I meet there, dog walkers, fishermen, paddle boarders, sea swimmers, runners and walkers, feel like I do – we value this amenity, not just for recreation but importantly for all the benefits it gives us for our mental health. I have met visitors from far and wide who return here because they love the easy access along the coast road to the beach and canal. During the weekend of the 17th and 18th July, every single parking space along Princes Parade was taken. There were locals and visitors from all over Kent, Sussex and London. The spread-out parking along the road meant that families, paddle boarders, elderly and disabled could all enjoy a spacious beach with no feeling of overcrowding. In the winter it is one of the few places where one can park and enjoy the view when so much of our coast is hidden behind high sea walls.

The protection of the wildlife at Princes Parade is a huge concern. A new road alongside the canal will be the direct result of the stopping up of Princes Parade and would have a devastating effect on the very precious resident badger colonies; the numerous and varied

nesting and migratory birds on both sides of the canal including Cetti's warblers; the feeding paths of many varieties of bats; foxes and small mammals; reptiles including toads, newts, slow worms and grass snakes. The disturbance of habitats and feeding areas, together with the very real chance of getting run over and causing road traffic accidents, makes this a very unattractive option to all of us who care about protecting the wildlife here. Noise and light pollution, however much they say will be 'mitigated', will nonetheless change the setting from a rural to an urban environment.

Folkestone and Hythe District Council (FHDC) have shown on many occasions their lack of consideration to public opinion and their disinterest in protecting wildlife except when so called green corridors look attractive on the building site plans. FHDC did not challenge the veracity of an ecological survey report (Ref: 5026-LLB-RP-EC-001 26.7.21) which included references to West Malling (see Page 2) which was clearly a cut and paste report. They have not challenged ecological reports that have missed many species that residents regularly spot. They have not asked residents, wildlife groups, the Badger Trust or local ornithologists for up-to-date local information. They have not kept to their own recommended timescales for ecological work but, on the contrary, threatened the safety of nesting birds by starting work during the nesting season. There is no doubt that wildlife will be harmed. By having FHDC and the developer working together in planning a new road along the canal, they show little or no intention to protect and preserve the existing fauna.

The Royal Military Canal is an important historic monument, and locally it has a very special place in our hearts. Apart from its historic value and the importance of maintaining its integrity in the landscape, it is not clear in the plans how run off from the road will affect the canal water or indeed how close the new road might be at any given point. A new road alongside the canal would jeopardise the current healthy abundance of insects, waterfowl and fish.

I appreciate you cannot consider the planned development; however, it would be disingenuous to pretend that the stopping up of the road is not directly linked to the intended housing and the value of beachfront homes. The council's own commissioned report (Ref: d:se 605-923 23.11.16) which incidentally was not revealed to the public until AFTER the planning permission was granted, expresses concerns over the costs and purpose of closing the road. In other words, many would be disadvantaged for the questionable benefit of a few.

The road is an easy access link for commuters, avoiding the busier Seabrook Road. The road survey is now out of date and does not factor the increased housing in the area as a whole and more specifically along Seabrook Road. In the past there have been speed awareness signs along the Princes Parade coastal road but, knowing they were applying for this development, I would suggest that it serves the FHDC argument to have what they can call a dangerous fast road despite no evidence of speeding accidents. A 40mph speed limit on a long straight road works well on a commuter link road that avoids the busy A259 out of Hythe towards Folkestone. However, you will be aware when you do your site visit that the surface has not been maintained. There are suggestions in the d:se report (Ref 605-923) on how to reduce traffic speeds and have the road coexist with the development. Furthermore,

it is invaluable to have an additional link to Folkestone for emergency vehicles should the main A259 Seabrook Road become blocked, as has been proved in the past.

The stopping up of the road is inextricably linked to the misinformation about the swimming pool. FHDC have let the Hythe Pool become rundown and then promised new leisure facilities that the people 'deserved', at Princes Parade or not at all. At the same time, planning permission was granted at Martello Lakes, in West Hythe, with the condition of an allocated leisure centre space. This land is still available as an alternative site to the one planned at Princes Parade. I realise it is not appropriate to continue further but I feel it is important that you have some indication of the misrepresentation that has led to the demands for this to be a public inquiry and that there is not a need to have the road stopped up for the swimming pool when the swimming pool could be located elsewhere.

In conclusion I wholeheartedly believe that the stopping up of the road will not benefit residents or visitors in any way, but it will undoubtedly harm local wildlife and change the character of our coastline. Nearly a thousand people gathered at Princes Parade on Sunday 15th to peacefully demonstrate and show how much they care. So many people will lose an area and an amenity they cherish for the sake of a few. We have a wonderful, unique coastal area and our road is an integral part of the identity of Hythe and Seabrook. Please help us keep our road.

Yours faithfully,

Nicola Stuart