

Statement for the Public Inquiry on Princes Parade

David & Anita Ellerby – local residents

We would like to object to the stopping up and potential diversion of Princes Parade. We are very unhappy with the road being stopped up and eventually diverted.

Our objections are as follows:

The first issue is the increase in traffic that will occur along Seabrook Road. This is already a very busy road with important junctions which lead from Cheriton, the M20, Hythe and Saltwood. It can often be very challenging turning out of these main junctions and any increase in traffic along Seabrook Road will make this significantly worse.

An increase in traffic concerns families with children either attending Seabrook Primary School or travelling to and from local secondary schools on the buses. The road outside Seabrook School is already a danger for children arriving and leaving. There are many parents who need to drop their children at school on their way to and from work. This causes congestion at the beginning & end of the school day.

With regards to older children who catch buses, the concern is that it will become increasingly difficult for them to cross Seabrook Road safely. The council would need to provide additional safe crossings for pedestrians to compensate for the increased traffic.

Furthermore, an increase in traffic along Seabrook Road will result in higher air and noise pollution levels. The air pollution outside Seabrook School has been an increasing problem and this would be made significantly worse as a direct consequence of the proposed changes to Princes Parade.

The next issue is that access to the beach will be restricted to only those who can walk. Many elderly and disabled residents park on the seafront road so that they can access the beach and promenade. Stopping up the road will discriminate against those who are less physically able when accessing the public beach. The subsequent diversion of the road will reduce beach access to pinch points between proposed buildings on the site.

Parking is increasingly becoming a major issue. Since the introduction of parking charges along Princes Parade, visitors to the area have used nearby roads and residential streets to park when they visit the beach to avoid charges. This is starting to cause problems for residents who have nowhere else to park and it is making some local roads dangerous both to drive down and for pedestrians to cross. It is particularly acute near the end of the canal at Seapoint and on Twiss Road in Hythe. When the road is stopped up, this problem will get worse as visitors will have to park in the residential streets if they want to visit the Royal Military Canal or the beach. We understand that a small car park is included in the hybrid plans, but there will be fewer parking spaces than are currently available on the roadside.

Princes Parade has always been a useful diversion when accidents or maintenance works lead to the closure of Seabrook Road. If the seafront road is stopped up, where will the traffic be diverted in the event of an emergency? If Princes Parade is not available, the only viable alternative route between Hythe & Seabrook involves a 5 mile diversion via the A20 using two narrow roads at either end (Horn St. & Blackhouse Hill).

We would lastly like to address the social & environmental impact of stopping up and moving the road. We understand that you have walked along Princes Parade and assume that you have also walked alongside the canal path. The Royal Military Canal is a very important green space for not only local people, but also many visitors to the area. The new road diversion would obviously increase air and noise pollution in this tranquil location and lead to a decline in birds and other wildlife. Green spaces and local walks became more important than ever during the pandemic and encouraged people to get out, explore and improve their physical and mental health. Diverting the road closer to the canal will completely change this special place and discourage local residents from walking this area and people from visiting the area.

To summarise, we believe strongly that the stopping up and subsequent diversion of the road is of no benefit to the local community. It is not necessary to move the road in order to develop the site at Princes Parade and it appears to us that the purpose of the proposal is purely to inflate the value of any houses built. We ask that you put the needs of the local community above those of the developer.