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DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

STATEMENT

SOUTHERN ROUTE CHOSEN FOR CHELMSFORD BYPASS

Mr Geoffrey Rippon, Secretary of State for the Environment, announced on 8 January 1974 that, following the recent public consultation on the three alternative routes for the Chelmsford By-Pass, he has decided after careful consideration of the various factors involved and the many comments received from the public, local authorities and interested organisations, that the Southern route should be accepted as the Department's preferred line. This route will, therefore, be published as draft Orders under the Highways Acts in due course, and members of the public will then have an opportunity to object to the Orders, and should it be decided to hold a Public Inquiry, to put their views to an independent Inspector. If these Orders are confirmed, a compulsory purchase order will be published for the land which will be needed. There will be an opportunity to object to this Order and possibly a Public Inquiry into it will be held. It is hoped that construction of the by-pass will start in late 1976, and that it will be open to traffic towards the end of 1978.

A by-pass of Chelmsford was included in the then Ministry of Transport's Trunk Road Preparation Pool in March 1968, and it has formed part of the Government's national strategic policy for future trunk road development. The improvement of the A12 London-Great Yarmouth trunk road, of which Chelmsford By-Pass forms a part, has continued under this policy. The proposed Chelmsford By-Pass aroused great local interest, with opinions differing as to where the by-pass should be sited. During an Adjournment Debate in the House of Commons on 6/7 December 1972, Mr Keith Speed, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport Industries announced that procedures were to be introduced to give the general public the opportunity of having a much earlier say in the planning of major new roads. On 21 December 1972 it was announced that these procedures would be applied experimentally to the Chelmsford By-Pass.

A consultative document, published on 27 April 1973 contained details of three possible routes - the Northern, the Army and Navy, and the Southern. The consultative document was placed on deposit at local authority offices, libraries and sub-post offices throughout the consultation area, and an exhibition, attended by over 5,500 people, was held on 4, 5, 7 and 9 May 1973 at the County Hall, Chelmsford. The public were invited to complete questionnaires indicating which route they preferred and the factors influencing their choice. A total of some 11,000 documents and 39,000 questionnaires were distributed. 12,974 completed questionnaires were received showing the following preferences:-

Southern Route	8,756	67.5%
Army and Navy Route	2,909	22.4%
Northern Route	1,095	8.4%
No preference stated	214	1.7%

Prominent among the factors influencing choice were the environmental implications of the routes and these included the effect on homes, agricultural and recreational facilities, noise, pollution, traffic conditions and cost.

Among the factors influencing the Secretary of State's decision, was the fact that the Southern route affects fewer homes than either the Northern route or the Army and Navy route. The latter route would pass through the urban area, and would create far greater noise nuisance than the other two routes.

There is virtually no difference in length between the Southern and the Northern routes, but the Army and Navy route, as presented, is considerably shorter. Because of the amount of residential property which would be affected by the Army and Navy route, however, the cost of this route would be much higher than the alternatives. Although detailed cost figures are difficult to calculate at this early stage of design, the Secretary of State is satisfied that there would be little difference in cost between the Southern and the Northern route.

The Secretary of State accepts that the Southern route will take a greater amount of agricultural land than the Army/Navy route, but feels that, in the circumstances, this disadvantage has to be seen against the greater disadvantage likely to be suffered by residents were the Army and Navy alternative to be adopted.

Copies of the consultative document and questionnaire were also sent to local authorities and numerous interested organisations, and comments were received from a number of these including:-

Essex County Council  
Chelmsford Borough Council  
Chelmsford Rural District Council  
Stock Parish Council  
Sandon Parish Council  
Great Baddow Parish Council  
Association of Essex Parish Councils  
Widford Parochial Church Council  
The Nature Conservancy  
The North East Metropolitan Regional Hospital Board  
The Ramblers' Association  
The Inland Waterways Association  
The Essex Naturalist Trust  
The Little Baddow Conservation Society  
The Billericay Society  
The Council for the Protection of Rural England  
The Rural Action for the Preservation of Essex  
The A12 Action Group  
The Chelmer Valley Association  
The Conservation Society  
The National Federation of Womens' Institutes  
The Northern A12 Group Action.

Six petitions were received and several people wrote to their local Members of Parliament. Many others wrote direct to the Department to express a preference for, or objections to, a particular route.

The Secretary of State welcomes the interest which was taken in this experiment which has helped in achieving the object of giving the public the opportunity of participating in the early planning stage of this much needed and important trunk road improvement.

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