

Fear of relief road 'revival'

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WORRIED at the prospect that a 'relief road' scheme abandoned because of local opposition is about to be revived, members of Highcliffe Citizens' Association, on Monday, agreed to ask Dorset County Council for a full statement as to the position.

Previously Mr. A. R. Chilton-Jones had written to the secretary (Major G. N. Frank), drawing attention to the fact that the County Authority proposed to spend, this year, £20,000 on an aerial and soil survey for a proposed Highcliffe By-Pass scheme, due to materialise in 1981 at an estimated total cost of £750,000.

He now reminded the members that the Association had strongly opposed a similar scheme proposed by the Hampshire authority some years ago, on the ground that the proposed route was 'impracticable and extremely costly'. At that time Christchurch Council had agreed with the Association that the route should be further to the north.

It now appeared that Dorset County Council was talking about the same route, but it was questionable if they had been fully advised about the former negotiations and difficult to understand why they should contemplate spending £20,000 in a year when money was short and rates had been substantially increased.

At the time the original project was estimated to cost £300,000, he, personally had maintained that £500,000 would be a more realistic figure. Now a figure of £750,000 had been estimated; and he felt sure that the eventual cost would be about £1,000,000—for a road which would cut Highcliffe in two.

Satisfactory diversion traffic could be achieved by extending the Christchurch bypass along the A35 road.

Describing the project as 'a nonsense', Lt. Col. M. E. Menage said it would be ridiculous to spend £20,000 on the proposed survey. County Hall was heavily overstaffed and there were plenty of people who could 'walk' the proposed route with them.

Actually, there was no need for a 'soil survey', as there was already a road running almost parallel to the one proposed.

"We don't want this road in Highcliffe," he declared. "There are other ways of overcoming the traffic problem."

The Association's deputy chairman (Mr J.A. Brooks) said on the earlier occasion the Association had been given a definite promise that nothing will be done until a traffic census had been taken—after which they would again be consulted.

Dorset County Council should be asked if that census had been taken what its implications were and if the county was prepared to accept the Association's view regarding an alternative route.

Stating that a traffic census had been taken by the Hampshire Authority in 1968 and that he had been engaged for three days on one taken in 1971, Mr. W.J. Locke said it appeared these had served no purpose other than to provide 'jobs for the boys'.

The chairman (Mr. A. Crawley) said according to his information it was unlikely that anything would happen this year, or that any money would be spent on the survey mentioned.

Within the next six weeks the Dorset authority would be calling a meeting to decide upon which five major projects should be considered for the current financial year. These would be selected from some 30 or 40-odd projects; and although the Highcliffe scheme would be among them it was unlikely that it would be one of those selected — although a

'token' sum might have been included in the estimates to provide for the possibility of a survey.

Dorset was well aware that Hampshire had promised to consult Christchurch before any route was decided and none had yet been agreed upon. There was no question of the old route being used. That was 'just dead'.

Stating that he appreciated the chairman's explanation, Mr. Brooks said he felt, nevertheless, that it would be better for the Association to have 'something in writing': and it was agreed that the action indicated should be taken.