



The Safer C7 Project

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE PROJECT

1. What is the project trying to achieve?

The purpose of the Safer C7 Project is to make this rural road in the South Downs National Park safer for all its users.

Experience shows that reducing the speed limit does not in itself generally reduce vehicle speed, unless there are also expensive enforcement measures. When applications are made to reduce speed limits, the police require physical and other measures to reduce speed, so that the reduced speed limit is self-enforcing.

We therefore intend to commission the production of a road design strategy for the C7 that will bring about driver behaviour and vehicle speeds which are appropriate for its location, geography and rural nature.

2. How will you go about this?

We intend to commission and implement a professional road design strategy for the whole length of the C7, based on the principles and exemplars in the South Downs National Park study, *Roads in the South Downs; Enhancing the safety and quality of roads and places in the National Park*, (June 2015); and the *July 2022 SDNPA Design Guide, Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), Sect c.7.1. Rural Highway Design*.

We will then use this costed design plan to apply for Community Infrastructure Levy funds to get it implemented.

3. Why don't individual parishes just commission East Sussex Highways to conduct much cheaper feasibility studies for particular problem sites along the C7?

- We believe that a consistent and coherent design strategy along the 7.5 miles of the C7, and through Kingston to the A27, will have a greater impact on driver behaviour. For example, there are currently more than 136 traffic signs along the C7, many with conflicting messages within a few meters of each other; e.g. 50 mph / Slow School.
- ESCC Highways prioritises sites for road safety improvements based on numbers 'Killed and Seriously Injured' within a specific 50 metre radius. Although there are frequent accidents on the C7, these are spread along the length of the road, rather than concentrated on one particular site.
- We want to commission an independent specialist consultant who can think outside the East Sussex Highways 'box', which invariably prioritises the smooth and fast passage of vehicles over the needs of other users. They will be asked to apply the design principles for rural



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roads set out by the South Downs National Park Authority and produce a costed design plan, for consideration by the project Advisory Group, Project Affiliates and others.

- A costed design specification for the measures needed along the C7 will provide the basis for applying for Community Infrastructure Levy funds on the scale necessary for their implementation.
- With individual feasibility studies for specific locations, parishes would need to raise their own funds for implementation.

4. What makes you think that there is any chance of getting the improvements made?

The Safer C7 Project has support from key players:

- **ESCC**

Rupert Clubb, ESCC Director, Communities, Economy and Transport, has given his support to the project as follows:

‘Having discussed the content of your email with my officers, and in order for you to access the grant funding, I am happy to give the County Council’s support for POLO commissioning the C7 feasibility study..... from a policy perspective, the strategy vision for the C7 accords with our wider strategies and priorities..... The proposed stepped approach that you have set out in your email seems appropriate for the study. Whilst we would not be able to advise (you) throughout the life of the study, as suggested in your email, we would be willing to provide the following limited advice and officer time at key points in this approach to ensure the study considers measures that would be acceptable to us as highway authority:

- *Review the consultant’s brief*
- *Provide advice to the consultant, once appointed, on possible interventions on the C7*
- *Commenting on the consultant’s report.’*

(Excerpt from an emailed letter to Joe Attwood, Project Chair, dated 30 April 2019).

This was confirmed in 2020 as follows. *‘Thank you for your email of 26 August 2020 in relation to the C7 Feasibility Study. I confirm that our position has not changed and that the County Council is happy to give our support to (the project) commissioning the feasibility study, subject to the same terms and conditions that were set out in my earlier email of 30 April 2019.’*

This position was again confirmed in response to an enquiry by Maria Caulfield MP in October 2022 regarding the reduction of speed limits on rural roads. The ESCC response to Maria Caulfield, also contained the following endorsement of the project’s aims. It states *‘If a lower speed limit is to be effective, it will require traffic calming measures to change the character and appearance of the road and reduce the average speed of traffic in accordance with the lower limit.....If the proposals are acceptable to us and the Police, and they are going to be funded externally, the County Council will happily endorse them.’*

- **South Downs National Park Authority**

The current Chair of the SDNPA is an ‘affiliate member’ of the project. The 17/10/22 letter from Maria Caulfield MP also quotes the following statement by ESCC. *‘The aspirations of (the Safer C7*



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Project) are to see traffic on the C7 slowed and potentially reduced, subsequently strengthening links with the objectives of the SDNPA. The County Council has met with the SDNPA in the past, to discuss more generally their proposals for implementing lower speed limits in the national park. In principle, if the proposals are funded externally and in line with our current policy on speed limits, we would be able to support them.'

- **Local councils and Parishes**

Lewes District and Town Councils, Newhaven Town Council, and our ESCC Councillor are all represented as Affiliates of the project.

Lewes Town Council, Rodmell Parish Council, Kingston Parish Council, Southease Parish Meeting, and the Kingston Rd and Cranedown Residents Association, have committed funds towards the cost of the C7 Design Strategy. Other local parishes – Piddinghoe, Swanborough and Iford – have yet to make a commitment.

A survey of residents in 2021 showed that at least 247 households in villages reliant on the C7 want improvements to be made to the safety of the road.

Northeast Manor School also supports the project and is represented on the Project Delivery Team.

5. How much will it cost to commission the road survey and design strategy?

We expect it will cost £35,000 - £40,000.

6. How will this money be raised?

We are making applications for grant funding, although many charitable bodies exclude road safety improvements because these are regarded as the responsibility of local authorities. (This puts us in a Catch 22 situation because the criteria used by ESCC Highways to prioritise roads for improvement, effectively exclude the C7.)

We are asking each parish to pledge a financial contribution.

We will launch a Crowd Funding campaign to try to raise the balance of the funding needed.

7. Will local people be asked to contribute again, to put the design plan in to action?

No, the sums required would be too large. The costed design plan will enable us to apply for large scale Community Infrastructure Levy Funding to pay for the implementation of the plan.

8. What guarantee do we have that the money won't be wasted?



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Although we are doing everything we can to ensure that the design plan will be acceptable to ESCC Highways, and to the other authorities, it is just not possible to guarantee that the plans will be implemented. However, without a design plan there is NO realistic chance of any improvements to the C7.

9. What happens if not enough money is raised or the project doesn't go ahead?

All money will be refunded to the donors.

Parishes are being asked to pledge an amount, but will not be asked to pay over any funds until the whole amount is raised and the project is able to proceed.

A crowd funding platform will be used which will automatically reimburse all donations to the donor if the total target amount is not achieved. The Crowd funder platform to be used includes an element of matched funding from East Sussex Council.

10. How will you find and appoint a suitable specialist highways engineer?

We will be taking advice and doing some research to identify potential candidates, who are suitably qualified and experienced, supportive of the SDNPA design principles and our own aims.

A specification will be drawn up, in consultation with ESCC Highways, the SDNPA, parish representatives and other stakeholders.

There will be a formal tender and selection process.

11. What are the management and governance arrangements for the project?

The idea for the project originated at meetings of POLO, the Parishes of the Lower Ouse. As the project has progressed, formal arrangements needed to be made for the management and governance of the project. As statutory bodies, the various restrictions and audit requirements for parishes, meant that it would be difficult for several parishes to collaborate within a formal constitution. After consultation with the parishes, The Safer C7 Project has now become a fully constituted entity in it's own right, with a bank account.

The structure consists of:

- A Management Committee, consisting of five volunteers who live along the C7.
- A Parish Advisory Group
- Project Affiliates, inc. representatives of LDC, LTC, ESCC, SDNPA
- Supporters.

Please see the project structure diagram provided, which shows the membership and relationship of these groups.

Further information about the project is available on our website; <https://www.theC7road.co.uk>

A photograph of a road with several cars driving away, overlaid with the text "The Safer C7 Project". The scene is outdoors with trees and a clear sky. The text is in a large, white, sans-serif font, centered horizontally across the upper portion of the image.

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