



THE SAFER C7 PROJECT

The Parishes of the Lower Ouse (POLO)

Survey of Local Residents

Summary of Results

Main Headlines

- The survey was undertaken over a 3 week period during June and July 2021
- 260 responses (from a total of 785 homes along the valley) – online and on paper
- A clear majority of respondents (91.5% - 238 residents) expressed concerns about using the C7.
- A clear majority (82% - 211 residents) indicated that they do not feel at ease when they, or others, undertake activities such as driving, cycling, walking or horse-riding along the C7.
- A clear majority (83% - 216 residents) indicated that the C7 has a negative impact on their quality of life
- A clear majority (95% - 247 residents) felt that steps should be taken to improve the safety of the C7, and
- A clear majority (90% - 231) support the plan to commission a road design study for the C7.
- A significant number of comments were also received – most supporting and some offering opposing opinions.

Paper copies of the survey were distributed to the 785 homes in the villages located along the C7. There had been 260 responses received by the 10th of July 2021, a response rate of 33%.

Responses from the villages were received, on-line and on paper, as follows: Piddinghoe (53), Southease (7), Rodmell (49), Northease (12), Iford (14), Swanborough (17), Kingston (72), Kingston Rd/Cranedown (27), Telscombe (3), Newhaven (2).

The survey contained 5 yes/no questions and a space for comments. The results of the questions are as follows:

Question	Yes	No
Do you have concerns about using the C7 Lewes to Newhaven Road?	91.5%	8.5%
Do you feel at ease when you – or others – undertake activities such as driving, cycling, walking or horse-riding along the C7?	18%	82%
Do you feel that steps should be taken to improve the safety of the C7 for all users?	95%	5%
Do you support the plan to commission a road design study of the C7?	90%	10%
Do you feel that the volume and speed of traffic on the C7 affects your quality of life?	83%	17%

A clear majority of respondents 92% - (238 residents) expressed concerns about using the C7.

For example:

“Terrifying access from my home onto C7. Traffic too fast, blind corners. No room for cyclists/riders.”

“Drivers get cocky and think they know the road so regularly put their foot down to get home or enjoy a windy road at 50/60mph the whole way without a thought there might be walkers or god forbid horses or a tractor on the road ahead. They might think they know the road but they don’t know who’s on it. Drivers get aggressive and frustrated with cyclists riding in groups making it impossible to pass them safely, so take huge risks on bends or hills in the road. There are no passing places for tractors and the same for cyclists... the entrance to the School or Northease Farm is not a safe passing point!! Attempted to exit The Street onto the C7, even with the tiny, dirty mirror opposite, is like taking your life into other hands at every time! In fact, as a wheelchair user if I wanted use the bus toward Lewes from The Pub, where I live, I would have to risk using the road to get to the tiny piece of pavement just before the pub as there is no path way outside the entrance.”

“There are regular crashes on the bend out of Rodmell, as cars are still speeding in the 30 zone, toward Southease, with cars ending up in the same garden, through a stone wall that has just been restored time and again, and in the other direction from Rodmell to Lewes, on the bend, with cars turning over in fields on almost a monthly occurrence with the farmer having to waste time and resources removing the car! I assume the council is waiting for fatality from either a car crash, pedestrian crossing or horse bolting before they act?!”

“The stress engendered each time I exit Whiteway Lane onto the C7 is unnatural and is unacceptable for a local resident to have to endure. The C7 is a minor artery mainly for the use of local Ouse Valley residents; it is not a main road to be used as a by-pass or short-cut. Walkers, Cyclists and Riders should be able to use this rural road without fear of accidents occurring. A survey would indicate the best solution to the current problem.”

8% disagreed.

For example:

“The current C7 set up is fine as it is, and appropriate for what it needs to be. If anything I would argue it actually ought to be upgraded from it’s yellow “rural” designation on an OS map to an orange B road because it is actually a significant arterial road both in its amount of usage and its positioning as the only through road on the western side of the Ouse for the best part of 3 miles. If anyone deems it needs to be made ‘safer’ for all road users then the answer is most likely to lie in an improved cycle lane/route and/or a pedestrian footpath. I would support either as long as it maintains the road’s existing 50mph speed limit. There is absolutely NO need to make the C7 safer for horses / equestrians – they already have plenty of local bridleways, a route along the river parallel to the C7 which they can use, & they also already take over & render unusable some of the key public footpaths as well (with or without permission I don’t know...) for many pedestrians who would otherwise use them. The horse have enough already. Concentrate on the pedestrians & cyclists if you’re going to focus on anyone.”

“There is nothing wrong with the C7. I regularly walk along it and you just have to accept this is a country road which is essential to the livelihoods of ordinary people who work along it. Any attempt to close or restrict it is symptomatic of the privilege of those pushing for this. We need the C7 available for vehicles to put food on the table. Leave it alone please!”

82% - (211 residents) indicated that they do not feel at ease when they – or others - undertake activities such as driving, cycling, walking or horse-riding along the C7.

For example:

“I feel cars and vans 'hurtle' along the C7 & chase cyclists round blind corners. I feel intimidated when I drive at (what I consider to be) a safe speed for such a narrow and twisty rural road.”

“It is a frequent but terrifying sight to see people walking along the C7, thinking that - according to the map, it is an unclassified country road in the South Downs National Park - so it will be a safe

means of getting into the Downs and on to the many footpaths and the South Downs Way. The temptation is to stop and give them a lift out of danger to safety, but unfortunately it is too dangerous to stop on the C7 because of the blind bends, high speeds and volume of traffic.”

“I want to feel safe crossing the road at the entry to Iford and Swanborough and Northease in order to catch the bus, walk the dog etc.”

“I would like to use an electric bike to get me to and from Lewes but I am far too afraid to cycle on the C7 because of the traffic speeds and the bends in the road. I have often seen car drivers take risks when overtaking cyclists and as a driver myself I have frequently been stuck behind cyclists unable to overtake. It is dangerous to cross with my grandchildren and even leaving the village feels dangerous in a car because of traffic speeds and limited visibility up and down the road due to bends. I think a speed limit of 40 would vastly improve safety.”

“The C7 is a scary road for everyone. Drivers drive too fast down a narrow road with lots of bends and low visibility. If you're a driver, pedestrians pop up from nowhere and I think there are many accidents averted at the last minute. There is not space for cyclists to cycle safely or cars to pass safely. I once ended up on the road as a pedestrian when taking the footpath from Kingston to Newhaven. Never again, it was a terrifying experience. I would love to walk and cycle on the road, but I do not dare. It's a pity from a climate change and quality of life perspective. As a driver, I'd also like cyclists and pedestrians to have more space so that it's safer for everyone!”

18% Disagreed.

For example

“There is absolutely NO need to make the C7 safer for horses /equestrians – they already have plenty of local bridleways, a route along the river parallel to the C7 which they can use, & they also already take over & render unusable some of the key public footpaths as well (with or without permission I don't know...) for many pedestrians who would otherwise use them. The horses have enough already. Concentrate on the pedestrians & cyclists if you're going to focus on anyone.”

“No problem to me, but the ignorance and bad road safety by other car users and particularly cyclists does cause other road users issues and difficulties.”

Another resident commented on this aspect from a different perspective:

“A Newhaven taxi driver recently volunteered that cyclists should not be allowed on the C7 after dark since it is a 50mph road. He uses it regularly. *Cyclists can't be seen round the bends and at 50mph it is too dangerous. The cyclists should not be there.* In my view this sums up the wrong thinking of many drivers on this road and a speed limit of 50mph encourages these views. Day or night a taxi driver cannot see round the bend. A cyclist, walker, farm vehicle, broken down vehicle or another driver could be in his path beyond the bend. The driver who cannot read the road ahead should not be driving at 50mph. This is basic road manual teaching. Because of this muddled thinking the driver imagines that the 50mph speed signs make common sense, observation and basic driving skills irrelevant. As though the C7 were a motorway laid out for safe 50mph driving. The fact of the

matter is that this taxi driver is chancing that there will be nothing on his side of the road for him to crash into when he gets round the bend every time he drives on it. Unfortunately, he is not alone.”

84% - (216 residents) indicated that the C7 has a negative impact on their quality of life, and gave examples which included:

“Those of us who cannot get a move on, face danger when crossing it, and as the village is split in two by the C7, many villagers - over 70 and up to 100 - take their lives in their hands just getting to the traffic island, let alone crossing to the other side. I live on the corner, and rather than turn right to go to Lewes, I turn left and turn around at the dirt road and then drive back as traffic comes so fast from the blind corner at the pub. People having to turn up Mill Lane are often sworn and tooted at, as they wait in the middle of the road to turn.”

“We live adjacent to the c7. In the past 4 years we have had three cars through the flint wall and into our garden.”

“We are trapped in the village because of the dangerous C7 - being unable to safely walk or cycle along it to join the Egret's Way at Dean's Farm. We cannot even safely use public transport as the location of the bus stop going north is on the very dangerous north junction of Piddinghoe onto the C7 - cars come speeding round a blind bends on both sides at 50mph; pulling out by car involves taking you life in your hands and everyone in the village has a 'near miss' story. The road is too dangerous for my 12 year old son to safely cross on his own to get to the bus stop to go to school in Lewes - it is terrifying to cross, having to rapidly look both ways all the time as visibility is so short, and cars speed at 50 + mph - overtaking on the blind bend when the bus is at the stop. It is impossible for elderly or disabled users of the bus stop to cross this road safely, leading to further social isolation.”

“Myself and my husband both do not drive and are reliant on travelling by foot and we use public transport. The C7 road has been of great concern to both me and my family, if we want to go for a walk towards Peacehaven, Southease or to use the bus stop to catch the bus going towards Lewes this means you have to cross the C7 at the north end of Piddinghoe village. This is usually a very frightening experience, even with looking in both directions because of the speed at which vehicles are going at and the blind corners, it doesn't give adequate time to cross, often I have to physically run across the road to safety. Once you cross the road then there is the extremely poor condition of the pavement, it is far too narrow and currently has vegetation growing that has blocked off parts of the pavement entirely, to avoid getting stung by nettles or tripping up on the overgrowth you are forced to have to walk around it and into the road. I want to learn to cycle but feel that the lack of safety on the C7 road stops this being a possibility for me. Because of being forced to run across the road myself, I would never feel confident to be able to push a buggy across the road or carry a child. The worry and concern I have about this road has actually caused me to have panic attacks.”

“I use it daily and nearly everyday I have close calls usually with people overtaking cyclists and it's very stressful. There are a lot of cyclists on the C7 and it's just too fast and narrow for bikes and cars to use. There is no option to walk safely to the next villages. It would be very beneficial to make cars slow down and space for cyclists and people.”

“It is not possible to cycle on this road, as the traffic is too fast and dangerous. I often need to cross the road at Swanborough but each time feel I am risking my life. I will not allow my 18 yr old daughter drive on this road as it is so dangerous. My 16 yr old daughter is unable to cycle to Swanborough from Kingston as it is so dangerous, so I need to drive her there instead which is ridiculous. My friends, neighbours and visitors often comment on how fast and dangerous the traffic is. The villages the C7 passes through are blighted by this road.

“My family are worried about cycling on the road so we can't get around in a sustainable way. Crossing the road is onerous for my daughter who will soon be going to school in Lewes. The bike path doesn't continue for the full length of the C7, so there's no alternative route.”

95% - (247 residents) felt that steps should be taken to improve the safety of the C7, and 90% (231) support the plan to commission a road design study for the C7.

For example

“For the 12 years I have lived here our attempts to get the Council to do anything about the danger of the C7 have been met with the response that we haven't had enough fatalities to justify reducing the speed limit. That approach entirely prioritises the commuting car driver over the local pedestrian, cyclist and resident and is completely at odds with the professed policy and strategy of the SDNP. It is time for a new approach that puts the C7 at the heart of a strategy that promotes walking and cycling not just for visitors to the SDNP but to the residents of the Lower Ouse Valley as well. Commuters who want to travel fast however can go on the A26, the C7 should be for the benefit of the residents of the Lower Ouse valley. We should not have to wait for a fatality for the road to benefit the community rather than something that reduces everyone's amenity and quality of living here. Thank you very much for conducting this much needed survey.”

“Thanks for setting up this questionnaire and the proposed road survey. I have heard lots of different views around road safety (from calls to reduce the speed limit to 30 to concerns about C7 villages become 'suburbs' of Lewes). I feel that safe roads for all should be paramount wherever we live, and feel there must be a happy middle ground where the rural qualities of the C7 villages are maintained and yet also become accessible and safe for all. They are not at the moment. With children aged 9 and 6 we like to travel by foot and by bike to and from Lewes and Newhaven and yet often find our decisions on where and when to go are dictated by the business of the road. This will only increase as they start to travel more independently and want to bike to school or safely catch a bus. I fully support a road survey and feel it's really in keeping with SDNP policy and local authority objectives around active transport. I would be happy to be contacted about this in the future.”

“I live in Rodmell with my husband and three school-age children. We would all love to see the C7 become safer, quieter and more usable. It would be transformational if residents from the Ouse valley villages were able to safely cycle along the C7 - to socialise, to exercise, to travel to school etc. The volume of traffic and the speed at which most vehicles drive currently make cycling/walking almost impossible. The C7 is the only road that links the Ouse valley villages with Newhaven and Lewes and I would whole-heartedly support a full review to help make it safer. Even crossing the road from one side of Rodmell village to the other feels like a risky exercise, and accessing the bus

stop is a danger in itself at the moment. We all know that we must choose more sustainable ways to travel, yet with an infrequent bus service and too much traffic, our alternatives to car usage are very limited. Please know that you have my full support in introducing measures to tackle climate change and to protect and enhance this part of the South Downs area of outstanding natural beauty.”

“The C7 carries volumes of traffic and weight of individual vehicles far above what its design capacity can carry, much of it travelling at speeds above what is safe. We experience difficulty exiting our drive on a daily basis. We observe poor driving each time we get in the car. We feel guilty about the frequency of driving into Lewes due to the poverty (?) of public transport, we welcome cyclists as they slow down the speeding cars, vans and lorries but feel it is too dangerous to cycle ourselves. Sussex police say they will not put in a speed limit that the public will not comply with - a counsel of despair! We welcome a survey and any subsequent action to return the C7 to the country road that it should be.”

A small minority disagreed. 5% (12 people) did not agree that steps should be taken to improve the safety of the C7 and a few were not convinced that the non-vehicular users should be attempting to use the road.

For example

“The C7 cannot be made safe for walkers. The speed limit should be 40 (not 50). “

“There is nothing wrong with the C7. I regularly walk along it and you just have to accept this is a country road which is essential to the livelihoods of ordinary people who work along it. Any attempt to close or restrict it is symptomatic of the privilege of those pushing for this. We need the C7 available for vehicles to put food on the table. Leave it alone please!”

10% - (26 people) did not support the plan to commission a road design study. Their reasons included the following:

“An expensive waste of money to tell us what we already know. Leading questions with no detail on costs or who is interested on a business and or financial level in promoting this. These are matters which should be left to the SDNP, ESCC and the Highways authority. “

“Bring speed limit down to 40mph. You don't need a road design survey, more common sense. A cycle path running alongside the road would be safer for cyclists and walkers.”

“I feel urgent action needs to be taken to make the C7 safer, simply imposing a maximum speed limit of 40 mph preferably 30mph with cameras to enforce this would make a massive difference. A study would be costly, delay action and in my view be unnecessary.”

“You need to accept the fact that the C7 is in reality a north-south feeder 'A' road, serving a significant Newhaven/Peacehaven population both, with the traffic levels comparative to the Lewes Chailey A road, or even the A272. The amount of traffic, cyclists, delivery vehicles already has a

significant 'calming' effect on local speeds and spending money on this is a waste of some resources.”

“Unless an effective deterrent - ie. average speed cameras - is employed, drivers will continue to ignore the speed limits. I know, because I live in the centre of Rodmell, right on the C7. In my opinion, a survey is a waste of time and money and will achieve nothing but a survey. It is already blatantly obvious that traffic calming is needed. Try walking along the road between Rodmell and Northease!”

“Although I support this project, I fear it will cost a lot of money and that we will just end up with a couple of signs and maybe some flowers. The problems affecting the C7 are the same over the whole country; too much traffic, people driving dangerously with no regard for anyone else. These should be tackled by central government but won't be.”

SUMMARY

There was a strong response to this survey. 260 (33%) residents living in villages and settlements along the C7 made responses to the five questions, and together provided 60 pages of comments.

95% respondents felt that steps should be taken to improve the safety of the C7 for all users, and 90% supported the proposal to commission a design specification to improve the safety of the road.

There was a notable consensus about the issues which need to be addressed. These included:

- Speed and volume of vehicles (inappropriate for the geometry of the road and range of road users)
- Poor sight lines when trying to enter the road from villages and junctions along the C7
- Narrow winding road with junctions close to blind bends
- Drivers overtaking cyclists in unsafe conditions
- Poor condition of the road surface
- Speed limits too high for road conditions and range of users
- HGVs using the road
- Little to no speed enforcement
- Few and inadequate pavements and footpaths alongside the road

Several respondents expressed views as to what could be done to improve the road, including:

- Lower the speed limit, variously, to 40mph or 30mph or 20mph
- Enforce the existing speed limits
- Install speed cameras
- Install speed bumps, mini roundabouts and chicanes
- Construct continuous footpath/cycle path parallel to the road

A few suggested banning cyclists from the C7.

84% (216 residents) indicated that the C7 has a negative impact on the quality of their daily life, and gave examples which included:

- Witnessing/experiencing accidents/close calls when using the road
- Being in daily fear of turning on to the C7 from their village or driveway when unable to see oncoming traffic approaching at high speeds
- Worrying about friends and family members using the road; e.g. crossing the road to reach the bus stop or letter box; cycling to school or work
- Being denied access to using the road for leisure activities; e.g. walking
- Noise generated by the volume of vehicles passing

Some respondents believe that simply lowering the speed limits or enforcing the current limits would resolve the problems. Others believe that installing speed cameras or roundabouts would solve the problems they encounter. A few respondents consider that the proposed study would be a waste of time and money, as the answers are obvious and ESCC should pay for them to be implemented.

Many respondents to the Safer C7 survey expressed the view that the needs of all users of the road need to be considered, not only motor vehicles, and that the safety and well being of all users should be prioritised over vehicle speed.

The Safer C7 project aims to commission a professional engineering report on the C7, with recommendations for specific measures to improve safety, which can be presented to ESCC, and used as the basis for obtaining public infrastructure funding in order to implement them.

CONCLUSION

The results of the local residents survey clearly demonstrate strong community support for this project.