

13th September 2023

Item 13.1

Traffic Steering Group

Kingston Parish Council
Transport consultancy advice
Request for design proposal and fee quote

Introduction

1. Kingston near Lewes is a village that lies to the south-west of Lewes within the county of East Sussex. It has a population of just under 1,000 people. The C324 road runs through the village, and it used as a “short cut” or “rat-run” for traffic travelling to and from the coast (eg, Newhaven and Seaford) to the A27 and onwards in a westerly direction as an alternative to the A26 strategic road connection. Traffic surveys that we have undertaken have identified that between 4,000 and 5,000 vehicles pass through the village each day to the detriment of the village and its residents.
2. The Parish Council has established a ‘Transport Steering Group’ to consider this issue with the aim of identifying solutions to it. The objectives of the Steering Group are to:
 - Reduce the volume of traffic passing through the village
 - Reduce the speed of this traffic
 - Create a safer and healthier environment for residents, pedestrians and cyclists, encourage more active travel and make Kingston a better place to live, and
 - Restore the rural appearance of the ‘C324’ road to one that primarily meets the needs of the immediate residents.

The requirement

3. The Parish Council and existing members of the Steering Group have already identified several specific priority areas (see appendix) and has sought advice from the term contractors to the Highway Authority on potential interventions. We are concerned that the suggested solutions will not significantly address the objectives above. They are generally directed at ‘traffic calming’ rather than traffic reduction. ***We are particular keen to ensure that the design of the interventions is consistent with the historic nature of Kingston and hark back to its idyllic setting at the foot of the Downs.***
4. The Steering Group is therefore seeking support from experienced transport consultants with the aim of developing creative and effective solutions that will address the objectives listed above – particularly the first one related to reducing traffic volumes.

5. Ideas we have explored amongst our membership include:
 - a) Physical bollards or barriers to enable enforcement of the width restriction at Ashcombe Hollow and to prevent commercial vehicles using it
 - b) Pedestrian and / or signalised controlled crossing at the junction of The Street and Wellgreen Lane where large numbers of school children cross the road
 - c) Something similar at the junction of the C324 and Juggs Way / Kingston Ridge where significant numbers of walkers, cyclists, horse riders and others cross the road along a strategic footpath / bridleway
 - d) More 'chicanes' and speed bumps and / or an extension of the existing 20mph zone
 - e) Use of digital technology to charge a 'toll fee', for instance, to through traffic
 - f) Widening pavements and / or creating segregated cycle routes in some locations where the road and / or pavements are presently too narrow (thereby reducing the carriageway to single working only).
6. These are some of our ideas based on our own understanding of this issue. We are keen to secure professional advice on creative, effective and designed solutions that meet our objectives.
7. We are particularly conscious of the fact that Kingston is a very pretty village located within the South Downs National Park, with the South Downs Way less than a mile from the village centre. The village boasts a conservation area, several listed buildings and a 15th Century Church. ***We are therefore keen to avoid 'heavy engineering' solutions and would prefer light touch and / or quality design and possible 'digital' solutions, instead, as referenced in the South Downs 'design guide' ("Roads in the South Downs"), attached.***

Budget

8. The Parish Council has a modest budget available to fund this work **and** the resultant interventions that will flow from it, so the initial consultancy support will need to be carefully and cost-effectively managed.
9. For information, the Parish Council has its own ring-fenced budget of £60,000 for "traffic calming works", which we expect to 'match' with a potential County Council 'Community Match' contribution of up to £50,000, with a further supplement from the South Downs National Park (as Planning Authority) through the Community Infrastructure Levy.
10. We suggest the following work stages:
 - a) Briefing from Steering Group members
 - b) Development of strategy for interventions with indicative designs and costs
 - c) Discussion with Highways Authority, alongside the Steering Group

d) Development of detailed designs

11. At this stage we are looking for a proposal, to include information on successful interventions that have been utilised elsewhere in similar circumstances, and fee quote (capped at £5,000) for stages a) and b) with the potential for follow up work on stages c) and d) subject to the outcome of stage b).

Potential Complementary Commission

12. Kingston sits to the west of the C7 road that runs from Lewes to Newhaven. 10,000 vehicles utilise this route every day. Residents of the villages along the road, who are similarly concerned about traffic volumes and speeds have formed "The Safer C7 Project Group".
13. The Safer C7 Project (<https://www.thec7road.co.uk/safer-c7-project>) is community led and seeks to improve safety along the whole road by seeking improvements and modifications that retain its characteristics and rural nature, as defined in the principles document ([Roads in the South Downs - South Downs National Park Authority](#)). The Project Group have recently completed fundraising to enable a consultant to be appointed, likely to be before the end of this year, following a tendering process. There are very clear similarities between this approach and that being developed by ourselves in Kingston so the Safer C7 Group will be seeking continuity between the two schemes when developing their own terms of reference to ensure as much as possible a 'seamless' one road approach.
14. Secondly, a group of organisations (including Lewes Town Council, 'sustainable' developer Human Nature, Cycle Lewes, Lewes Living Streets, Lewes Climate Hub and others) in the nearby town of Lewes is exploring opportunities to reduce the overall level and impact of traffic in the narrow and presently congested historic town centre. It is likely that a similar commission to this brief and the one expected re the Safer C7 will be issued in the coming months. Once again, we expect there to be added benefits if the Lewes piece of work were also undertaken by the consultant chosen to work on the Kingston and / or C7 projects.
15. From a consultancy perspective there is therefore the potential to work on all 3 projects and, in so doing, develop an exemplar design solution to traffic reduction and public realm improvement for a village, a rural road and a market town. This will be of significant commercial value to the chosen consultancy. As a result, we request that your fee quote be discounted in recognition of the business development value of this and the related commissions.

Evaluation and Scoring

16. Consultants are asked to address the following criteria which will be used as the basis for evaluation and scoring, with weighting as shown below:

- Approach to commission and experience (25%)
- Track record and impact in a rural area (25%)
- The team including experience and professional qualifications (25%)
- Fixed fee for all 4 work stages (para 10 (a) to (d)), including discount (25%)

17. For an informal discussion please contact Steve Pearce at stevepearce139@gmail.com and / or 07961 111988

18. Proposal and fee quote should be sent to: John.Bewick@kingston-pc.gov.uk

24th August 2023

Appendix – locations identified by Kingston Parish Council as likely to benefit from further traffic calming measures

1. The transition from the A27 a major trunk road and through route, to the C324, a rural road. Currently this road has a national speed limit (60mph) extending from the A27 roundabout to the 30mph restriction at the parish boundary on Ashcombe Hollow, just to the north of Kingston Ridge. The road is largely rural in character with nothing to warn motorists they are approaching the village or to encourage them to modify their driving. *How can this be better managed to slow traffic and encourage safer driving?*

2. Access from Ashcombe Hollow footpath across the C324 to the bus stops on the A27. Currently there is no safe crossing point. This deters use of public transport. *How do we remedy this?*

3. Oversize/overweight vehicles regularly ignore the access restrictions. This occurs in spite of signage on both east and west bound carriageways of the A27 and on the C7. *Can the signage be improved to ensure the restrictions are adhered to? Can a physical width restriction be installed? This contributes to point 4 below.)*

4. Erosion of the sides of the C324 along Ashcombe Hollow (i.e. from the railway bridge to the junction with Kingston Ridge) caused by overrunning the carriageway on both sides, threatening the stability of the banks and creating a potential hazard. It is gradually undermining the rural character of this previously narrow lane and is also eroding a natural traffic calming device. *Can kerbstones be installed to deter further erosion and unintended widening of the carriageway?*

5. Dangerous junction C324 with Kingston Ridge and Juggs Way, a cross roads on the brow of a hill with curving roads and poor sightlines, shaded by trees. This is a major access to the Southdowns Way and is heavily used both by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. It is dangerous for them as there is no safe crossing point. It is also dangerous for vehicles as sight lines are poor and traffic speeds are high. *Can the junction be redesigned to slow traffic and create a safe crossing point? Would a village gateway buildout at this point help reduce traffic speed and improve safety?*

6. The carriageway between Kingston Ridge and The Avenue is wide and curving, which encourages traffic speeds. The pavement is narrow and feels hemmed by a high kerb and the high retaining wall on its eastern side. This deters pedestrians using the footway as it feels very intimidating and dangerous. This deters walking, which in turn impacts on the use of public transport as this is the main route to the bus-stop on the A27 (see point 2, above). *Can the footway be widened and the road narrowed to single lane? Is this road suitable for conventional chicane width restrictions?*

7. The junction of Ashcombe Lane with The Avenue. Currently vehicles speed down the hill to this junction. With the proposed development at Castelmer (12 houses) there will be more traffic feeding into this junction. This is a relatively complicated junction with the access to Castelmer offset from the Avenue, together with the presence of household driveways. *Can the junction be redesigned to slow traffic and create a safe crossing point?*

8. The junction Wellgreen Lane and the Street. This junction is within the existing traffic calming and is in the Kingston conservation area. The recent Conservation Area Appraisal (SDNP - out for consultation) identified that there is little to indicate that people are entering a conservation area and suggested that this junction could be improved to create an entry point to the historic village. It is also the crossing point for the village school and the bus turning point. *Can this junction be redesigned to achieve these ends? Would some form of 'Public Realm Enhancement' (e.g. benches, improved landscaping/signage) be suitable for this location?*

9. Junction C324, Wellgreen Lane with the C7. This is a busy crossing point for both walkers and riders to and from the village to the new footpath/cycleway on the eastern side of the C7, as well as to the nearby garden centre. There is no safe crossing point on a very busy road. *Can an island/junction be installed to provide a safe crossing point, as well as a pathway to the garden centre?*