**Community Highways Application Structure and Proposed Key Points**

# Issues, needs and/or initiatives and benefits

The rural parish of Coldwaltham is located entirely within the South Downs National Park and consists of three main settlements: the village of Coldwaltham, with a primary school, public house, church and village hall (with Post Office); the hamlet of Watersfield, location of the Alban Head recreation ground with football and cricket pitches and children’s play park; and the historic hamlet of Hardham, home to St Botolph’s Church and its unique 12th century paintings. The town of Pulborough is located approximately two miles to the north of Coldwaltham. Pulborough provides essential services and facilities to the residents our parish, including two supermarkets, a library and a mainline railway station.

All three parish settlements are bisected by the A29. The A29 is part of the Major Road Network (MRN) and the Lorry Route Network (LRN) within West Sussex, linking the north of the county to the coast, but it is not identified as part of either the County Strategic Road Network (CSRN) or the Primary Route Network (PRN)[[1]](#footnote-1). The road is well used by Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) however, potentially avoiding congestion on alternative strategic routes such as the A24 and A27. It is also popular with recreational motorcyclists, especially during summer evenings and at weekends, travelling to the Whiteways’ café meeting point atop nearby Bury Hill[[2]](#footnote-2).

This application responds to the fundamental concerns of the local community that use of the A29 within Coldwaltham parish is dangerous and inappropriate, due to excessive traffic speeds, the presence of unsuitably large and/or noisy vehicles, and inadequate road infrastructure for its current use. 92% of respondents to our community survey cited road safety as their biggest concern, with 80% citing noise. The community attributed the causes of these issues to vehicle speeds (87%) and the types of vehicles passing through (86%). 72% of respondents identified the existing road infrastructure as a major cause. A summary of the survey results is within the Statement of Consultation at Appendix 2). The full survey data is at Appendix 2A

The A29 between Pulborough and Coldwaltham is currently subject to a 60mph national speed limit, until the entrance to Coldwaltham village where a 30mph speed limit commences. This is despite the road passing through Hardham settlement and past residential properties directly accessed from the road. The road features a series of bends, is prone to surface water flooding, and significantly narrows at the Coldwaltham rail bridge, where oncoming traffic is often in the centre of the carriageway (see Appendix 7 for images). Continuing southwards, the 30mph limit continues through Coldwaltham village (including past St James’ primary school), between Coldwaltham and Watersfield, and on through Watersfield hamlet where the speed limit increases to 40mph immediately before a sharp left-hand bend just north of Bury Gate junction.

Police enforcement activity (SSRP data is awaited but indications are high levels of non-compliance with speed limits) and the lived experience of our local community (evidenced in our public survey) suggests the 30mph speed limit is not adhered to. We have requested, but not yet received, GPS traffic speed data from WSCC. However, most concerningly, the highest proportions of survey respondents considered the residential areas within Coldwaltham village and Watersfield hamlet to be the most significant locations for concerns about excessive vehicle speeds (82% and 81% respectively). This is despite the existing 30mph speed limits and precautionary signage.

Analysis of WSCC Collision Data (see Appendix 4) indicates a high incidence of collisions: in the north part of Coldwaltham (perhaps suggesting vehicles not slowing from 60mph); at the narrow Coldwaltham rail bridge (national speed limit applies); at the multi-way Bury Gate junction (40mph limit applies).

Paragraph 4.64 of the West Sussex Transport Plan 2022 to 2036 (‘WSTP’) recognises that infrastructure on some LRN routes, particularly in rural areas, is not well suited for goods vehicle use due to size limitations. This is the case in Coldwaltham parish, where narrow, unprotected footways run directly adjacent to traffic (including HGVs). The footways are considered unsafe by residents. 84% of survey respondents stated they were affected by the road issues as pedestrians, and qualitative data revealed specific concerns surrounding the safety of Vulnerable Road Users (VRUs). A parent stated they were unwilling to let their children use the road independently due to safety concerns. Another guardian observed that there was no means of safe passage for children when walking to school or to the playing fields, due to speeding, dangerous crossing points and narrow pavements. The headteacher of the primary school reflected their concern that *“at drop-off and pick up times… some drivers have no regard for the safety of the school community”.*

A plethora of evidence promotes the concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods, where people can meet their everyday needs within a short walk or cycle, presenting multiple benefits including boosting local economies, improving health and wellbeing, increasing social connections in communities and tackling climate change[[3]](#footnote-3). Whilst the three parish settlements are within a short walking distance of one another, and despite Pulborough and its essential services being within a 20-minute cycle ride, active travel is minimal. Furthermore, public transport options are severely limited to twice-weekly bus service operations, resulting in a high dependency on private vehicles, including for short journeys. The South Down National Park Authority (SDNPA) recognises that traffic speed and motorised vehicle dominance can *“drive human activity away from the road to the extent where a village struggles to maintain its internal connections and identity”[[4]](#footnote-4).* This effect is evidenced through survey responses revealing concerns for the segregation of the parish settlements from one another as well as restrictions to the accessibility of key services and facilities and the associated isolation of residents, particularly less mobile members of the community. Furthermore, the appearance of the street scene, with an absence of people, and high walls and fences positioned to block noise from homes and gardens, adds to the sense of the A29 being an unimpeded through road. Again, SDNPA evidence recognises this situation being likely to result in increased speeds and *“a vicious cycle [being] set in motion, which can reduce the liveability and economic vitality of villages”[[5]](#footnote-5).*

Excessive noise and vibrations associated with heavy vehicles are particularly concerning in view of the parish’s context within the South Downs National Park, designated and protected due to its special landscape and characteristics. The SDNPA’s Landscape Character Assessment specifically notes that the tranquillity of the area is affected by its proximity to the A29[[6]](#footnote-6). Detrimental noise impacts are further evidenced by the presence of six Noise Important Areas (NIAs) along the A29 within the parish[[7]](#footnote-7), identified ‘hot spot’ locations experiencing the highest noise levels likely to be impacting the health and wellbeing of residents nearby, as well as wildlife. Furthermore, four Conservation Areas are defined within the parish (two in Coldwaltham, one in Watersfield and one in Hardham), recognising the historical value of these areas, also demonstrated by the presence of numerous listed buildings. Evidential studies[[8]](#footnote-8) suggest a demonstrable link between damage to historic buildings and their proximity to heavily trafficked roads, due to ground-borne vibrations. A 2009 report on “Speed and Road Traffic Noise” by the UK Noise Association states that “there is measurable link between traffic noise and speed” and that “with speeds of between 20 and 35 mph, reducing speeds by 6mph would cut noise levels by up to 40%”. Improvements to people’s lives are clearly possible.

# Proposed works or activities

The overarching aim of our proposed approach is to improve the safety of the A29 within Coldwaltham parish, reducing the current harmful impacts of its use to levels appropriate for its situation within and between rural settlements, and in the broader context of the national park. The four objectives intended to support achievement of this aim are as follows:

1. To increase motorist awareness of the local communities, including VRUs, encouraging behavioural changes to reduce vehicle speeds and noise;
2. To make changes to lower and/or enforce the existing speed limits to ensure vehicle speeds are appropriate for the road context;
3. To make improvements to the road infrastructure to support active travel, helping pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and other road users to travel more safely;
4. To discourage use of the A29 within the parish by inappropriate vehicle types.

It is recognised that single interventions (such as introducing new road signage) are unlikely to address more than one objective or achieve our overarching aim in isolation. We are therefore proposing an integrated approach whereby a number of small, incremental improvements are introduced which are complementary to one another, and collectively achieve significant cumulative benefits. Our approach is realistic, as during the course of its development we have ruled out intervention options on the grounds of being unsuitable for a major road and lorry route (such as the use of raised tables or speed humps to slow traffic). Furthermore, we have discounted some infrastructure improvements because of cost or viability concerns (such as physical pavement widening). These options remain highly desirable, however, should the financial climate ever be permissive to their implementation. Our focus is on lower cost “quick wins” that could be rapidly implemented, or phased as part of a series of mitigations, and would result in immediate, but lasting beneficial impacts. An infographic summary of the collective mitigations is provided at Appendix 3.

We recognise there are different routes to ensure the delivery of these interventions, such as the use of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to implement speed limit changes, or Chief Constable authorisation of the deployment of safety camera technology. The focus of this application is on mitigation proposals which could be delivered directly via approval of a Community Highway Scheme, but we provide detail of the collective scope of our proposals to demonstrate their interdependencies and integration benefits. In addition, we realise the importance of encouraging the local community to share the responsibility of implementation (such of through the maintenance of private land encroaching footpaths) ensuring collective ownership of issues and their enduring commitment to improvements.

The policy context for our proposals is multifaceted, derived not only from the West Sussex Transport Plan objectives (with alignment summarised in a table in Appendix 8), and its thematic and area-focused strategies, but also the West Sussex Speed Limit Policy. Furthermore, our location within South Downs National Park encourages our adherence to the Authority's ‘Roads in the South Downs’ guidance. We have sought to ensure that all proposals are appropriate for the rural and special character of our parish and its communities, requiring a high quality and distinctive but effective response. Appendix 5 (Alignment to WSCC West Sussex Speed Limit Policy) and Appendix 6 (Alignment to ‘Roads in the South Downs’ – SDNPA 2015) provides further detail of how our proposals fit with these policies and guidance.

Finally, our proposals have been subject to public consultation, and proritised according to the level of local community support received. The ‘Wider Community Support’ section below plus Appendix 1 (Consultation and Support) and Appendix 2 (Statement of Consultation) provide additional information on how community engagement has informed our approach.

**Proposed initiatives to be funded by community highways scheme (in order of priority)**:

1. **Changing the colour of the road surface in defined parts of the public realm within Coldwaltham and Watersfield** to provide an alternative environment, altering driver perception by emphasising residential spaces and vulnerable pedestrian crossing points, or the presence of vulnerable road users, such as cyclists and equestrians, resulting in anticipated speed reductions of approximately 3-4 mph[[9]](#footnote-9). This intervention type has the highest level of community support (from 86% of survey respondents). Proposed locations for implementation are within Coldwaltham village at St James’ Primary School, at the Greatham Lane/Waltham Park Road junction; and in Waterfield at the River Lane/Sandy Lane crossroads (providing access to the Alban Head recreation ground) in Watersfield. Smaller bands of colour are proposed at the village gateways, described within intervention 3.  
   It is anticipated that this intervention would have an immediate impact, which could be heightened by the removal of central white lines in the same spaces. It is proposed that a buff-coloured surface, rather than brighter colours known to highlight dirt and spills, would be more appropriate for the rural environment. The areas defined by the different road surface colour would be small, to reduce installation and maintenance costs but still ensure effectiveness. West Meon village in Hampshire provides a compelling case study, demonstrating the successful implementation of this type of intervention in a comparable context.
2. **Introducing buffer strips to existing road margins adjacent to pavements (and on the opposite side of the road) throughout the 30mph zone** to ‘virtually’ widen the footway (in lieu of physical widening) and convey road narrowing, designating safer space for pedestrians and other active travel users, and suggesting reduced carriageway width to decrease traffic speeds. We suggest this invention responds appropriately to the high proportion of local community respondents who supported pavement widening (85%), as well as recognising concerns about the realisation of shared cycle and pedestrian paths within the existing restricted pavement space. The buffer strips would be marked by a coloured road surface or continuous white line, depending on costs and the effectiveness of visibility. The case study of Rogate in West Sussex illustrates the successful implementation of this invention in conjunction with proposals similar to those described within proposals 1) and 3)[[10]](#footnote-10) .
3. **Installing roadside gateway treatments at northern entry point to Coldwaltham and southern entry point to Watersfield** to reduce traffic speeds approaching the settlements (by approximately 3-4mph) by increasing awareness of the approaching residential environments. These distinctive but rurally-appropriate structures would reinforce settlement boundary designations, with the integration of speed limit signage and a village nameplate within the gateway as well as buff-coloured road surface ‘bands’ to maximise impact whilst effectively decluttering the public realm. This intervention is supported by a high proportion of survey respondents (71%). The assessment of mitigations suitable for Cheriton village in Hampshire outlines the benefits of implementing this measure in a similar environment and provides cost estimates[[11]](#footnote-11).
4. **Installing distinctive signage between Coldwaltham and Waterfield to reinforce the existing 30mph speed limit, and increase awareness of road hazards**, for example the presence of equestrians and wildlife (deer) within the vicinity. This proposal was supported by a lower proportion of survey respondents (57%), which may reflect concerns about effectiveness, or excessive cluttering of the environment. It is suggested however, that if implemented in conjunction with proposal 5), the current smaller and ineffective repeater signs would be replaced by more noticeable 30mph signage to recognise the change between speed limits. We would also request that road surface reminder roundels be used. This would reinforce limits to less observant motorists and also ensure that a 30mph limit is seen when foliage hides upright signs in spring and summer. The presence of road edge buffers (Intervention 2) would further identify the location as a low-speed area. To allay any concerns regarding cluttering, other existing signs could be rationalised.   
   In addition, we are proposing the removal of existing cats’ eyes – more indicative of high speed trunk routes – throughout the 30mph section.

It is suggested that the above community highways initiatives are implemented in conjunction with proposed Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), as follows (in priority order):

1. **Creation of a 20mph zone on the A29 150m either side of St James’ Primary School** to improve crossing safety for children and other VRUs. It is envisaged that signage, in conjunction with a limited area of differentiated road surface colour proposed by Intervention 1), would be used to reinforce the new speed limit. This proposal is supported by 73% of survey respondents. The continued employment of the current crossing guard during school hours would be required to enhance effectiveness during the highest-risk periods, whilst the permanent nature of the solution would support pedestrians and other road users at all other times. The extent of the zone would include the road sections adjacent to the village hall and Post Office, protecting its customers, including less-mobile members of the community and other VRUs. As already described, Interventions 1) and 2) would be integrated with the 20mph zone, according to distance from the school.

1. **Reduction of speed limit from national speed limit to 40mph from Pulborough to just north of the Coldwaltham overline bridge,** to improve safety and encourage active travel for short journeys, connecting communities to essential services and facilities. An additional benefit of the invention would be to ensure consistency with the recently-approved reduction of the A29 speed limit south of Watersfield from 50mph to 40mph through the parish of Bury. In addition, the A283 between Pulborough and Storrington (similar in nature to the A29) has recently had a speed limit reduction to 40mph (from the national speed limit).   
   A reduction to 40mph may also discourage unsuitable vehicles who might otherwise select the A29 in Coldwaltham parish as the fastest available route, aided by satnav routing. We recognise however, that some members of the local community raised concerns about the reduction to 40mph, and that ultimately, the decision on what is an appropriate speed limit will be determined following in-depth analysis of speed data, to which we do not have access at present.   
   A key reason for our proposal is to make using the A29 between Coldwaltham and Pulborough safer for all road and footway users. For long parts of this section, the public footway – often unavoidably narrow – runs immediately adjacent to the (60mph) road. In consequence, very few people use it for active travel – it’s simply too dangerous. Further, pedestrians are forced to cross the road multiple times in order to follow the footway. The Wey South Path also crosses the road in a 60mph section.
2. **Extension to existing 30mph speed limit to the north of Coldwaltham overline bridge and to the south of Bury Gate junction** to reduce collision likelihood in these higher-risk locations, as well as slow speeds prior to entry to village residential areas. We recognise the importance of ensuring that the 30mph is not extended too far from settlement boundaries, as this may result in drivers ignoring the limit if it did not appear to be consistent with the surrounding context, but we judge this is a proportionate solution to address existing issues of road layout and inappropriate infrastructure. We have not specifically consulted on this intervention option but are willing to undertake further engagement with residents and neighbouring communities, as well as exploring the potential impacts of advisory speed reduction interventions, at these locations.

**Community-led interventions**

1. **Clearing of road-adjacent footpaths** to improve accessibility and user safety. The existing footway between Coldwaltham and Watersfield is unavoidably narrow in some places but most of the route is heavily overgrown with foliage, and where leaf litter has provided a growing medium, plant growth means the surface width is around half that potentially available. Given appropriate assistance from WSCC – including site safety facilities and the disposal of removed detritus - we believe the parish could mobilise local support and get landowner co-operation to undertake footway widening, making future WSCC upkeep simpler. Coupled with lower vehicle speeds, this would enhance pedestrian safety (highlighted as a key concern by our survey) and encourage active travel.
2. **Planting schemes within settlement centres** to enhance public realm and encourage slower speeds. The parish would also encourage community-planting in the settlement centres. This would help create a welcoming ‘people live here’ environment and in turn help to reduce traffic speeds. This is likely to be well-supported by community and low cost. It would be complementary to road surface colour changes and the proposed 20mph school zone.

**Medium Term**

1. Installation of a strategically-located speed camera to provide enforcement of 30mph and act as a deterrent to speeding in the area most likely to see excessive speeds. The section of road outside the entrance to Lodge Hill – a youth activity centre – would be a suitable spot. This intervention is supported by 85% of survey respondents. We recognise the cost issues and that this is a decision for Sussex Police/SSRP, to be informed by speeding datasets. With this in mind, we recognise it is most likely to be implemented in the medium term.
2. Our survey also told us that many residents favour de-designating the A29 from the LRN. There seems to be some inconsistency of the current position – the road is currently part of the LRN but not the CSRN or PRN. We understand that a WSCC review is ongoing and look forward to hearing more on this.

# Wider Community Support

We consulted widely and obtained extensive support for changes to the way traffic uses the A29. Rather than include details here we have listed all those consulted and who have confirmed support in Appendix 1, with specific attachments at Appendices 1A and 1B. West Sussex County Councillor Charlotte Kenyon and Coldwaltham Parish Council Chair Guy Nelson fully support our objectives, as does Andrew Griffith MP. We have also consulted Jo Shiner, Chief Constable, Sussex Police, who kindly offered to meet with our group and initiated a recent site visit from SSRP.

In particular, we highlight the extensive local survey carried out over a six-week period ending early July 2024. A summary is attached as Appendix 2 with full survey data in Appendix 2A. The very clear direction the survey feedback provided helped shape this application.

# Cost of implementation

Without access to WSCC cost information we are cautious about estimating potential costs for the proposed interventions but have identified examples of similar schemes recently proposed within a comparable rural settlement within the National Park[[12]](#footnote-12), and therefore provide details from this assessment to demonstrate both feasibility and viability. We also suggest that some interventions could be accommodated within normal WSCC public realm activities (e.g. road resurfacing, footway maintenance) with the potential for cost savings to be realised. Paragraph numbers correspond with Intervention numbers

1. Coloured road surface treatment areas x 3 sites St James’ school; Greatham Lane/Waltham Park Road; River Lane/Sandy Lane) = c. £30,000
2. Road margin buffer strips (length of 30mph zone) = unknown although example shows coloured surface 2x costs of white line marking
3. Village gateways (x 2 pairs) including integrated signage and buff-colour road surface bands = c. £22,000
4. Distinctive signage and road surface speed roundels = c. £10,000
5. School 20mph zone excluding coloured road surface treatment area (signage and additional road markings) = c. £10,000
6. Reduce National Speed Limit to 40mph Pulborough to Coldwaltham = c. £8000
7. Extension of 30mph limit (to Coldwaltham rail bridge and Bury Gate junction)   
   = c. £16,000
8. WSCC and community-led pathway clearance and maintenance = within existing WSCC responsibilities and budget plus community funding
9. Community-led planting within settlement centres = unknown costs (community funded)
10. Speed camera = c. £50,000 (fixed site), c. £125,000 (average speed camera)[[13]](#footnote-13)
11. De-designation of A29 as LRN = unknown costs, to be determined by WSCC review

# Funding sources

At this stage, we have limited knowledge of what interventions WSCC may consider, their potential costs and how much of those costs could be considered normal public realm expenditure. Also, perhaps works outside the usual could be combined with regular works to minimise cost. We have therefore not been able to fully evaluate possible funding sources.

We would seek WSCC feedback before approaching potential sources. It is possible that some contributory funding may be available from the Parish Council and we have previously indicated a contribution ‘in kind’ for local footway clearance and planting initiatives.

We are aware of an expected Community Infrastructure Levy payment from proposed development of 5/6 substantial properties at Lodge Hill by Briarsgate Developments, which presumably could provide some funding.

We would also seek some contribution from the South Downs National Park Authority who are supportive of our objectives.

1. Figure 2: Primary Route Network and Figure 3: County Strategic Road Network - West Sussex Transport Plan 2022 to 2036 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [Bury Hill - Whiteways Takeaway Kiosk | Arundel | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/whiteways/) promoting late night motorbike events [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 20-minute Neighbourhoods – Town and Country Planning Association (2021) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Roads in the South Downs – South Downs National Park (2015) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Roads in the South Downs – South Downs National Park (2015) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Paragraph F4.5 of South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2011 – Appendix F [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. [Extrium > England Noise and Air Quality Viewer](http://extrium.co.uk/noiseviewer.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. [(PDF) Case studies of the effects of traffic induced vibrations on heritage buildings (researchgate.net)](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312623489_Case_studies_of_the_effects_of_traffic_induced_vibrations_on_heritage_buildings) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. West Meon case study within ‘Roads in the South Downs’ – South Downs National Park (2015) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Rogate case study within ‘Roads in the South Downs’ – South Downs National Park (2015) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Cheriton Village Road Safety Assessment – 2020 Consultancy (2023) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Cheriton Village Road Safety Assessment (2020 Consultancy, June 2023) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. SSRP estimates [↑](#footnote-ref-13)