

By: Overview and Scrutiny Manager

To: Environment and Regeneration Policy Overview Committee –
31 January 2008

Subject: **INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A JOINT COMMITTEE WITH
EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL**

Classification: Unrestricted

Recommendation: The Committee is asked to consider participating in a joint Select Committee review with East Sussex County Council on the A21 at Filmwell.

1. (1) The Chairman of East Sussex County Councils Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee has asked whether Kent County Council would be interested in a one day Joint Committee to scrutinise the Highways Agency about the A21 Trunk Road at Flimwell

(2) Attached is an the outline proposal for this joint piece of work prepared by East Sussex County Council. (Appendix 1)

(3) Members views are sought. If the Committee decides to participate in this Joint Committee the Committee are asked to authorise the Overview Scrutiny and Localism Manager to arrange the County Councils representation following consultation with the Chairman Vice Chairman and Liberal Democrat spokesman of this Committee

Recommendations

4. The Committee is asked to consider whether to participate in the joint review with East Sussex County Council on the A21 at Filmwell and if so to authorise the Overview Scrutiny and Localism Manager to arrange the County Councils representation following consultation with the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Liberal Democrat spokesman of this Committee.

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Background Information: *Nil*

East Sussex County Council

Proposals for a A21 joint scrutiny

On 1 November 2005 two representatives from the Highways Agency met the Chairman of the East Sussex Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Godfrey Daniel, at an informal meeting to discuss concerns about the A21 trunk road near Flimwell. A section of the A21 (lying just inside Kent) had recently been “de-dualled” at that time and Cllr Daniel was very concerned at the negative impact the scheme had had on accessibility to places south of Flimwell (Hastings and Bexhill in particular) which had been felt by residents and businesses.

The Highways Agency representatives:

- explained that various options had been considered before deciding to de-dual the Flimwell section and provided a business case which outlined the various safety questions that led to the decision.
- agreed to provide ‘before’ and ‘after’ crash data to include not just the length of the actual scheme but also the lengths of single carriageway to the north and south to ensure that the loss of the second lane did not cause drivers to overtake in other unsuitable locations resulting in crashes there instead.

Crash data

Crash data has now been made available. The ‘after’ data provided covers a period of 22 months from 1 October 2005 to 31 July 2007. The ‘before’ period was set to 1 October 2003 to 31 July 2005 so that it covers the same length of time and matches the same seasons of the year as the ‘after’ data. On this basis the crash results are:

Section of A21	Before	After
Full length of A21 between Lamberhurst bypass southern roundabout and the Hurst Green speed limit.	31	33
A21 at Flimwell (de-dualled section)	5	2
Sections of A21 either side of de-dualled length.	26	31

The A21 crash data has also been compared with data from the same ‘before’ and ‘after’ periods for a control group of all the A roads in Rother District apart from the A21. This is to assess whether the change in crash numbers on the A21 is in line with the trend in the area generally, or whether it is significantly different in which case there may be specific factors at work on the A21, such as the Flimwell de-dualling.

The control group shows **249** crashes in the ‘before’ period and **276** ‘after’. Applying the *Chi squared* statistical test shows that the increase in crash numbers on the A21 itself is not statistically significant and appears to be in line with the general area trend.

However, before drawing any conclusions, it would be desirable to carry out a more detailed analysis of the crashes along this length of the A21 to establish whether

there is a greater *proportion* of displaced overtaking crashes as Councillor Daniel suspects, or if it is simply more of the same type of crashes as before.

The provisions in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 include the Highways Agency as a *relevant partner authority* for the purposes of local government overview and scrutiny. In this context, Cllr Daniel with the support of his scrutiny committee colleagues is proposing that we establish a one-off scrutiny session held jointly with interested scrutiny Members from Kent County Council to meet with representatives from the Highways Agency to discuss:

- the response to the crash data relating to the de-dualled section at Flimwell and adjacent sections.
- the intentions and timetabling for dualling other parts of the A21 which is of strategic interest to both Kent and East Sussex County Councils.

Highways Agency contacts:

A21 Route Manager: Martin Wright, Highways Agency, Dorking (Tel 01306 874146).

Highways Agency Network Strategy Team: Peter Minshull.
(peter.minshull@highways.gsi.gov.uk).

East Sussex County Council Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee members:
Cllr Godfrey Daniel

East Sussex County Council officers:
Colin Clarke
Michael Oates

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