

# Community reaction, and, Conclusions

## Initial community reaction to Worthing Option D Downland Section

A discussion group of 26 interested local individuals and organisations met to consider the “D” option in Sompting on 8.10.14. Attendance included the 3 landowners, the commercial farming beekeeping vineyard and golfing business interests, the most affected households, local walkers & cyclists, and members of the Friends of Sompting Church, Sompting Parish Council, North Lancing Community Association (District Cllr), Worthing Archaeological Society, and Lancing & Sompting Pastfinders. Others who sent their apologies and points of view were Worthing Downlanders, local horse riders, Sompting Abbotts School. The meeting resolved nem con:

1. Members of the group welcome that the Study Group is considering Worthing solutions involving tunnelling and sustainable transport investments (some members preferring one or the other).
2. Members of the group consider downland route option D to be unacceptably damaging to important and endangered landscape and habitats and species in the National Park.
3. The group urges that this unacceptable Downland route (option D) should be taken off the table as quickly as possible, to avoid damaging controversy impeding more acceptable forms of improvement to the A27.
4. The group would welcome greater openness in the A27 Study, including opportunity for early stage consultation input into the more supportable non-downland options, and, clarity as to methodology to be applied to economic and environmental assessment of the options.

## Conclusions

The A27 Feasibility Study Group’s output shows commitment to pursuing road-building options which may be popular. However there is a risk that it may be perceived, along with the A27 Action Campaign, as too driven by the road-building agenda and not paying genuine or sufficient attention to the government’s travel hierarchy (see below). This would lead to a controversial planning environment around improvement proposals with the likely result that nothing is achieved.

Specifically as regards the downland section of Option D through the National Park: in view of the above evidence, if this or something like it were to be left on the table, there is a further risk that the A27 Feasibility Study and bodies supporting it will be perceived as lacking in the duty of regard to the National Park’s Purposes. Such a perception would generate a severely controversial public planning environment.

The detailed evidence given above regarding this landscape’s recreational use, natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage values, confirms that this protected landscape justifies continued protection under the National Park Purposes and Duty defined in the Environment Act.

**Given the harm to the Park that would be caused by the downland Option D or similar, and the impact of the inevitable controversy on the Worthing A27 improvements process: any Worthing downland route options should now be discounted outright.**

**Note on Transport Policies in the National Park Partnership Management Plan 2014-19**

The Partnership Management Plan (PMP) states:

*The Government's travel hierarchy is the starting point for the PMP's transport policies:*

- *Reduce the need to travel*
- *Switch to sustainable modes*
- *Manage existing networks more effectively*
- *Create extra (car related) capacity only when alternative methods have been fully explored*

PMP Policies 35-40 are formed in the context of this travel hierarchy.