

Appendix D – Conserve Alfriston Group Proposals

Conserve Alfriston is supported by around 225 villagers and local businesses. We seek a thriving village centre, where community life, pedestrians, equestrians, cyclists, and local traffic have priority, and where large vehicle movements are minimised. We promote a village (and valley) wide traffic scheme that is sensitive to our historic environment, a key area of the National Park. Our group has unified previously competing initiatives, and we are building consensus around our practical proposals locally and with wider stakeholders through consultation and dialogue.

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Petition submitted by: Bill Rendall 07977 456851, Hannah Parkinson 07951 232272

Conserve Alfriston
c/o Todhurst
West Street
Alfriston
BN26 5UX

23rd May 2017

Dear Chairman, Chief Executive, and Councillors,

Today, Conserve Alfriston is presenting a petition from our village to the Chairman of East Sussex County Council.

Many of you will be aware that the Conserve Alfriston group (supported by around 225 villagers and businesses) is campaigning for an appropriate solution to the issue of traffic management in the village of Alfriston.

The petition states:

We, the undersigned, believe that the proposed ESCC traffic scheme will have a detrimental impact on lives and businesses in Alfriston. We believe that an alternative scheme of the type proposed at this exhibition can improve the situation for all road users, whilst enhancing our historic village. We therefore urge ESCC not to take its own proposal beyond the design stage, but instead to work with villagers on the proposals presented at the exhibition weekend on the 29th and 30th April 2017.

The petition refers to our alternative proposal to address the traffic concerns in our village, which was presented at an exhibition held in the OCC hall in Alfriston, and to which all villagers, local businesses, and several stakeholders were invited. It is signed by 365 people, overwhelmingly from Alfriston and the Cuckmere Valley. This is far more than any previous petition on this topic, and also the numbers who indicated support for the current traffic light based proposals during your consultation process.

We are writing to you to set out the background to our proposals, and to request you to respond positively to the wishes of the petitioners and to work with us.

We enclose a copy of the petition, together with this supporting documentation:-

- Our alternative proposals for traffic management;
- The quantitative results of the survey we carried out at our exhibition (96% of respondents supported our ideas);
- Some qualitative survey comments in response to our work; and
- Our earlier quantitative study demonstrating the degree of concern from those villagers and businesses who would be most affected by the current traffic lights based proposals.

Background

It may be helpful to summarise some of the issues that have led us to submit this petition, and the rationale behind our proposals.

Sadly, traffic management in Alfriston has been a divisive issue for many years – it seems the only thing everyone agrees on is that there is no perfect solution. We understand that ESCC has a duty to respond to evidenced concerns about safety, or where there is a detrimental impact on the quality of lives as a result of traffic issues. And we realise that the different and deeply held views regarding the appropriate action to take in the case of such a special village as Alfriston make managing the situation difficult. So we sincerely thank ESCC for its well-meant work seeking to address this difficult issue.

ESCC's approach has been to focus specifically on "the narrows", the narrow part of our High Street, in an attempt to improve the lives of people in this area. As you are aware, the current traffic light scheme that has been proposed has been very divisive. We maintain our deep concerns regarding the appropriateness of a hard engineering solution in the conservation area, and many aspects of the consultation process, including the limited information provided. However, it has stimulated further thought about a more appropriate solution. We understand that the imperative for action is not the official safety record (comprising a single incident), but quality of life considerations. The (anecdotal) evidence base and the experience of villagers is that traffic problems occur throughout the village and are often related to large vehicles. A solution that seeks to improve things in one area but has negative secondary impacts in the heart of our High Street and the Market Square where there are most pedestrians, and also does not address the large vehicle problem, is bound to attract criticism on grounds of effectiveness as well as appropriateness.

Your consultation, and our experience, demonstrates that there is a clear groundswell of support for change which led to some people supporting traffic lights in the absence of any other choice, but that did not equate to support for traffic lights per se. We ask you to review the enclosed "Lessons from the Responses to ESCC's Consultation" which shows that the very villagers and businesses most affected by the current traffic light proposals - those it seeks to help - are strongly opposed to it.

However, we believe we can build on the work of ESCC, and in particular, the study being undertaken by James Vaks. James has been very helpful and the topographical analysis and other work that is in progress could be leveraged to develop our proposals.

Key Points Regarding Our Proposal

Our proposal is attached and we ask you to consider it. Here, we highlight three key aspects:-

1) The Proposal Framework is Based on Evidence and the Concerns of Villagers

The results from our exhibition survey (see “Conserve Alfriston: 2017 Exhibition Responses”) support our contention that traffic issues occur throughout the village (84% agree), and are related to large vehicles (98% agree). Respondents also overwhelmingly feel that conservation and economic issues are important in developing a solution (97% agree) and that we should seek to change driver expectations and behaviour along the valley (91% agree).

We have sought to create a structured framework of modular developments built on these principles that can improve our safety, the quality of our lives, our village economy, and its special heritage, as well as improving traffic flows for through drivers. As a result, we received overwhelming support – 96% of respondents support our proposals (69% strongly support) and 90% feel they will benefit their quality of life. Conversely, even though most think something must be done, 89% of respondents oppose the current traffic light plans (74% strongly oppose) with 84% of people saying that they would be detrimental to the quality of their life.

2) The Proposal is Designed to Build Consensus

We are serious in our intent to build as wide a consensus as possible for our proposals amongst village residents and businesses, as well as with wider stakeholders. Our proposals are not simply what a few people want. Instead, they result from listening to multiple viewpoints before creating a structured framework that we believed could attract wide support.

At our exhibition, we were therefore delighted that support came from residents, businesses, and visitors from across our village. These included many whose concerns ESCC have focused on: residents of the narrows; people who walk our pavements with disabled relatives; a bus driver; owners of listed buildings in the High Street; and many who had supported the current traffic lights proposals on the grounds that “something must be done”, but now prefer our ideas. We intend to continue this approach as we review the qualitative response to our survey and reflect on any widely expressed views and new suggestions.

More widely, we seek the support of stakeholders, many of whom attended our exhibition. We are very grateful for the backing of our County Councillor, Stephen Shing, and of Maria Caulfield and Kelly-Marie Blundell, the Conservative and Liberal Democrat candidates in our constituency at the upcoming General

Election. Alfriston Parish Council has responded positively to our ideas, and we believe will grant us support next month. We have sought advice from an Inspector in the Wealden Neighbourhood Policing Team who validated our basic approach and is contributing further ideas. We are now sending our documentation to the South Downs National Park Authority, to seek their support and expert input. If elements of our proposals (e.g. the use of mirrors / VAS) need the support of the Department of Transport, we believe stakeholders will help us gain this.

We want to combine the local knowledge of villagers with the expertise of stakeholders, not least ESCC, to produce the best possible scheme for Alfriston, and to maximise support for it, leaving behind the conflict that has characterised this issue in the past.

3) The Proposal Supports a Phased Implementation

Our scheme is cumulative and incremental in the way that it aspires to change driver expectations and behaviour on the approaches to Alfriston. Although for maximum effect we wish to see it implemented in full, our modular approach allows a staged implementation. This could have several benefits, practically, financially, and politically.

- Practically, some elements will be easier to implement than others, for example those concerning signage, parking or improvements outside the centre of the village. These could be implemented quickly, whilst more difficult issues are being resolved. This would also enable their incremental effects to be studied.
- Financially, and during times of austerity, we believe that our plans will be more cost effective for ESCC, but clearly we need your help in costing them. Staged implementation could help smooth funding issues, and our consensual approach will hopefully encourage a dialogue regarding financial contributions from multiple official bodies.
- Politically, the historic difficulty with progressing this issue means that many have become frustrated, believing that nothing will ever happen. We believe that a few “quick wins” from our proposals would reassure villagers that appropriate action is being taken.

We understand that Alfriston has been difficult for ESCC to work with and that your proposals have been a well-intentioned response to what you have perceived as a specific problem raised in one part of the village. We hope that our documentation demonstrates that a wider approach is needed. Our scheme is more evidence-based, makes traffic management and environmental improvements the length of the village/valley, and is attracting far greater support from residents, businesses, and visitors. Whilst much policy formulation is understandably about quantitative metrics, emotions are important - it is love for our village that drives our campaign. As one respondent commented “*this is a*

proposal to save Alfriston and improve it for the residents, from the residents who understand the problems". Much more qualitative support is shown in the document "General Praise for Conserve Alfriston's Proposals".

The positive response to our plans creates a new opportunity to unite stakeholders and take action. As we hand in this petition, we ask you to respond positively to the wishes of the petitioners, and for the support of ESCC in working with us to develop and implement our proposals. By so doing, you will help to Conserve Alfriston.

Yours Faithfully,

The Conserve Alfriston Committee

Bill Rendall / Caroline Adcock / Graham Skelcey / Hannah Parkinson

Julie Garvin / Liz Uridge / Neil Parkinson / Ray Savage / Russ Uridge / Sylvia Daw

on behalf of the 365 petition signatories and our 225 supporters.

To:

Councillor Michael Ensor, Chairman of the County Council

Becky Shaw, Chief Executive

Councillor Carl Maynard, Lead Member for Transport and the Environment

Councillor Stephen Shing, Councillor, Willingdon & South Downs

East Sussex County Council,

County Hall,

St Anne's Crescent,

Lewes,

East Sussex

BN7 1UE

A Comprehensive, Structured Proposal

Approaches

Gateways

Centre

Gateways

Approaches



Conserve Alfriston: 2017 Exhibition Responses

300+ Exhibition Visitors.

c.200 Presentation Attendees.

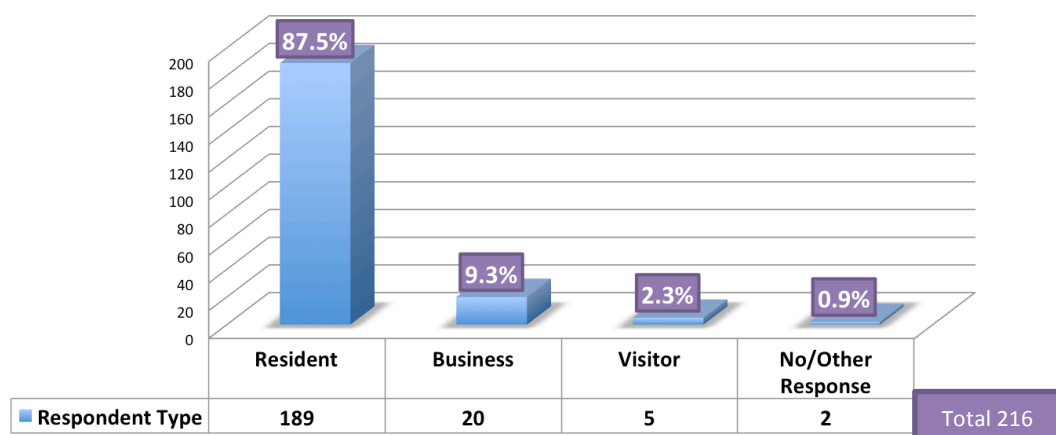
216 Feedback Form Respondents.

365 Petition Signatures.

Our exhibition was held over the weekend of 29th/30th April. All residents and businesses were invited via leafleting to their addresses and posters around the village and High St. Seven formal presentations were given over the weekend and volunteers were available to discuss our proposals at all times. Questionnaires & petitions were available; most were returned at the event, others over the next week.

About Respondents

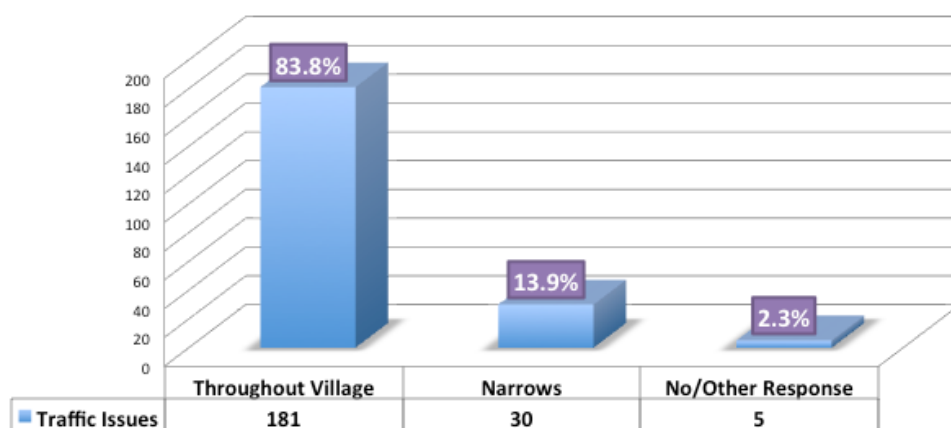
Are you a **resident / business / visitor**?



217 forms were submitted. One form was a duplicate and omitted from this analysis.
Some respondents were residents who run businesses. These were categorised as businesses.

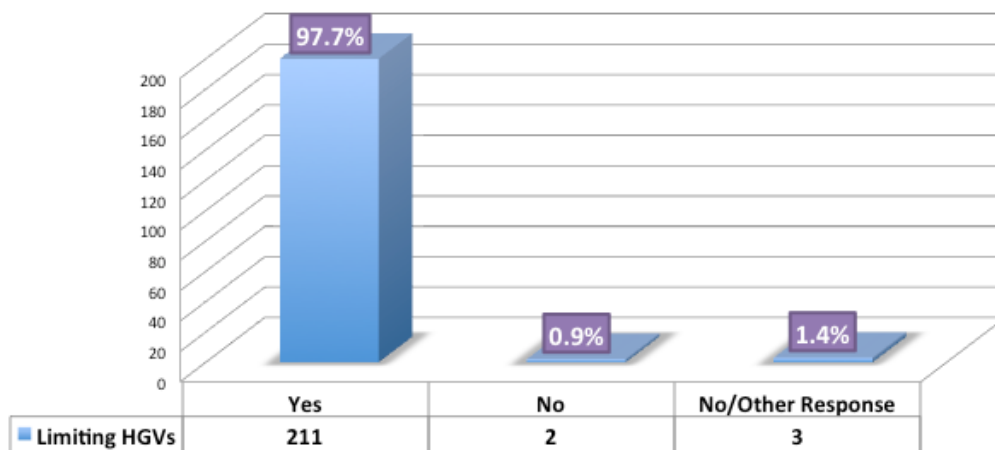
Traffic In Alfriston and Possible Solutions

Do you think that **existing** traffic issues are only in the Narrow section of the High Street OR throughout the Village

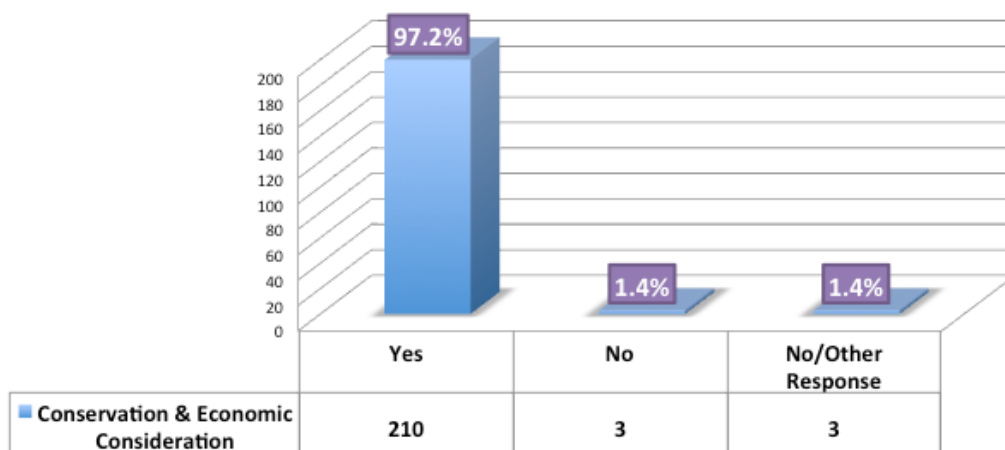


A few respondents selected both choices. Since the narrows are part of the village, these were classified as throughout.

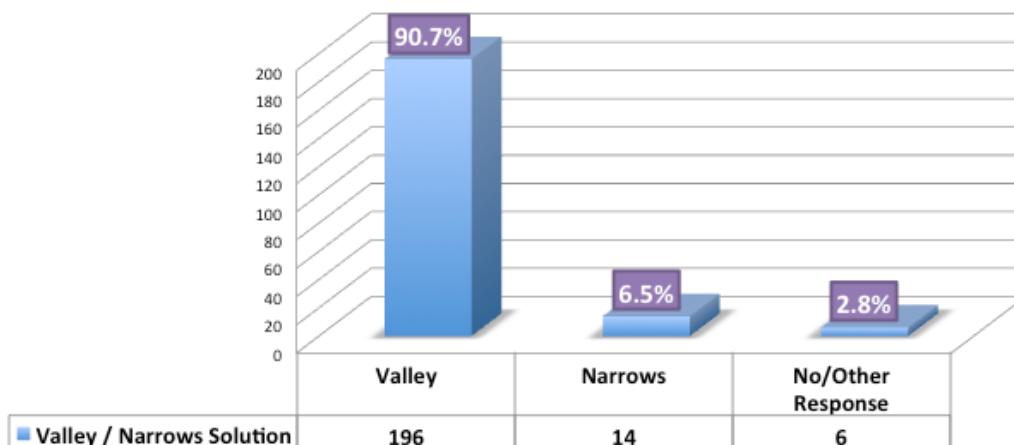
Do you support **limiting the number of large vehicles** passing through the village (whilst enabling access)?



In developing a solution, do you think that **conservation and economic issues** are important, alongside **safety and congestion** considerations?

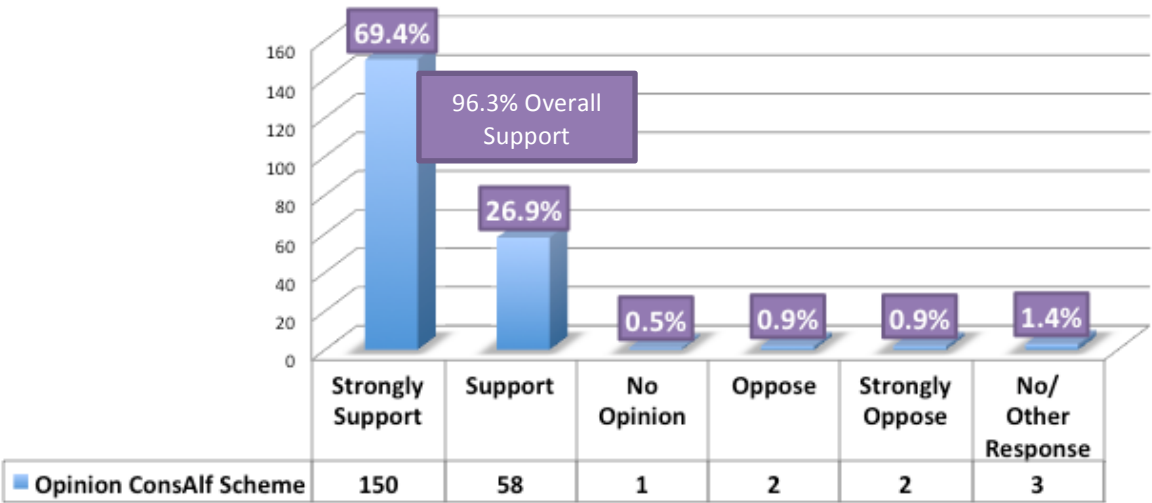


In developing a solution, do you think it should **change behaviour** along the valley, or solely focus on the narrow part of the High Street?



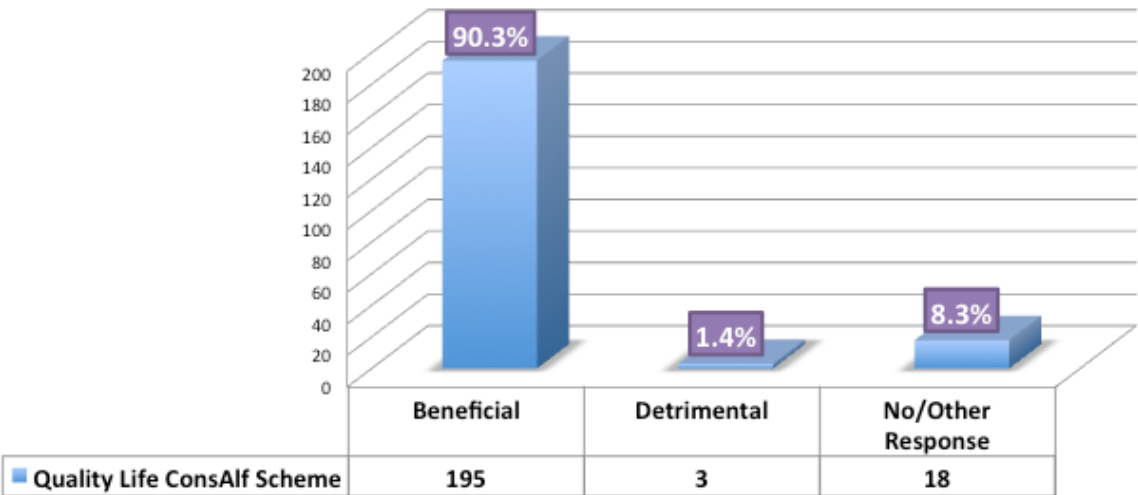
The Conserve Alfriston Proposals

What is your overall opinion regarding our proposals?



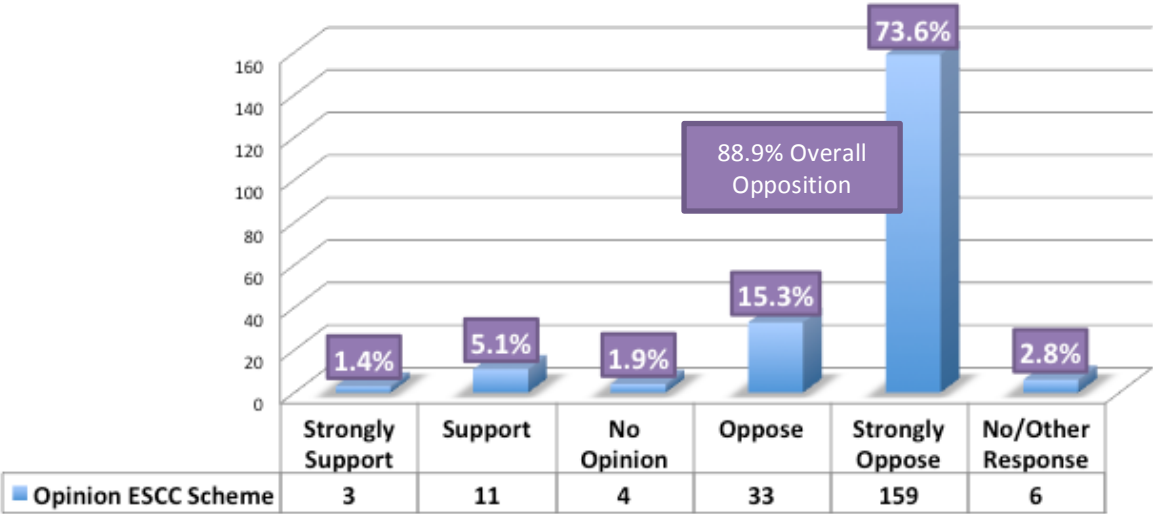
A few respondents selected both Strongly Support and Support. These were split equally between the two categories.

If implemented, do you think these proposals would be beneficial or detrimental to **the quality of your life** (or business, if you are a trader)?



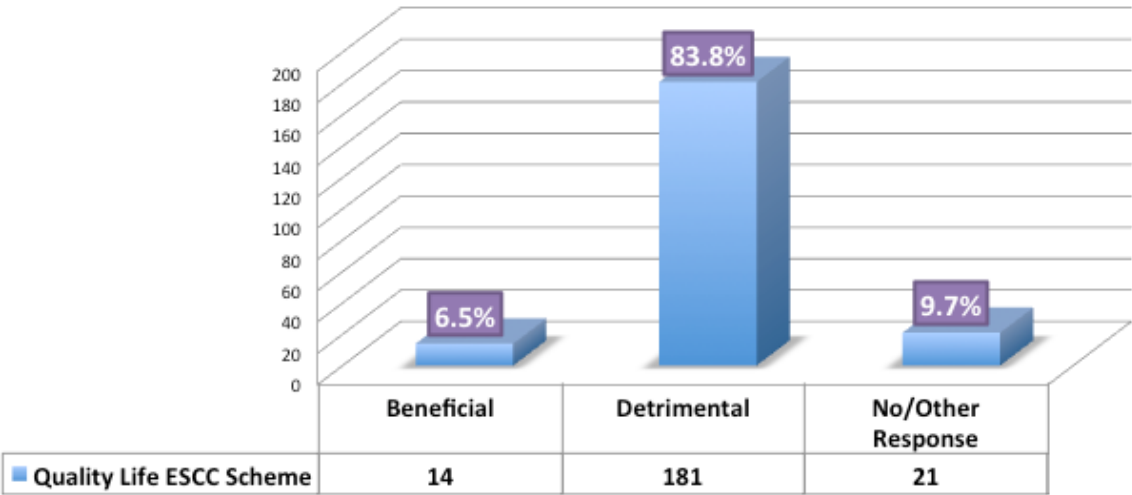
The ESCC Proposals

Given the critique presented here, **what is your overall opinion of the ESCC Proposals?**



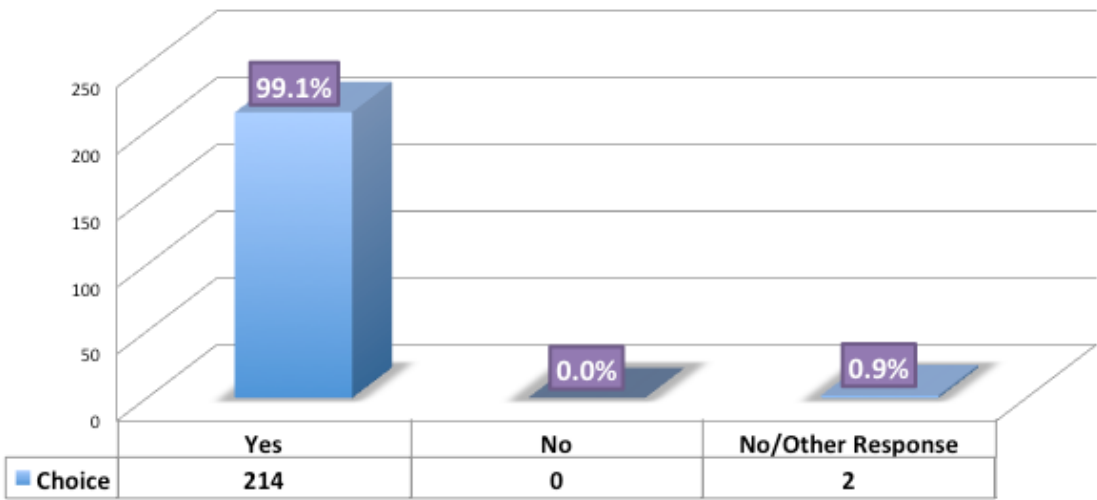
A few respondents selected both Strongly Oppose and Oppose. These were split equally between the two categories.

If implemented, do you think ESCC’s proposals would be beneficial or detrimental to **the quality of your life** (or business, if you are a trader)?



Choice

Do you believe that the village should be offered a meaningful and informed choice of schemes before any one is implemented?



Qualitative Responses

To assist the development of our proposals, the reverse side of the questionnaire asked respondents which elements respondents particularly liked, and which they disliked or would like to see modified. We also asked for general comments. The qualitative response will be summarised separately.

Conserve Alfriston is supported by around 200 villagers and local businesses. We seek a thriving village centre, where community life, pedestrians, equestrians, cyclists, and local traffic have priority, and where large vehicle movements are minimised. We promote a village (and valley) wide traffic scheme that is sensitive to our historic environment, a key area of the National Park. Our group has unified previously competing initiatives, and we are building consensus around our practical proposals locally and with wider stakeholders through consultation and dialogue.