

Annex 1 to Minutes of Strategy & Resources

FTC STRATEGY & RESOURCES WORKING GROUP TUESDAY 18th JULY 2023 : FIP UPDATE

FIP Board Meeting

Considerable progress has been made towards starting to actually implementing various proposals that have been identified in FIP to improve the environment and air quality in Farnham Town Centre. The FIP Board met on 16th June at which the results of the traffic modelling of the hybrid options V (Minimal Change) and Y (two way traffic on Woolmead Road with East Street restricted to one way bus operation) which had been identified as being appropriate for further review at the previous FIP Board meeting held in March. The traffic modelling revealed that whatever hybrid option was pursued journey times for many cross town journeys would increase although this assumes no modal shift from private car to alternative means of transport. This should not be of any real surprise since longer journey times are inevitable for many trips unless there is to be investment in new road building (e.g. Western Relief Road) which is highly unlikely given restrictions on public expenditure and Central Government's climate change objective of achieving carbon net zero.

East Street

Whilst Option Y would create a semi pedestrianised environment in East Street and is the preferred option of FTC it is accepted that making Woolmead Road two way could only be implemented if there was acquisition of land (which is not in SCC ownership) to widen the road at the pinch point with Bear Lane. It should be added that the need to acquire land is disputed by The Farnham Society who have been advised by highway engineer, Robert Mansfield. SCC are, however, the responsible highway authority. The original development plans for the Woolmead site are, however, currently subject to review and it is possible that any revised plans might include releasing a the small amount of land required at the Bear Lane pinch point to allow Woolmead Road to meet the technical requirements for two way operation.

In the short term the closure of East Street for an unknown period of time will be necessary to allow the Section 278 works associated with the Brightwells development to take place. Given the recent difficulties that were caused by the closure of West Street have highlighted the need to plan more effective mitigation measures in advance of the anticipated closure of East Street which is expected early 2024. One of the mitigation measures that has been suggested by SCC Cllr Catherine Powell is for Woolmead Road to temporarily to be made two way with HGV movements either being totally prohibited or restricted to movements in one direction only. If such an arrangement was successful then consideration could be given to making such an HGV restriction permanent so that Woolmead Road could be made two way without any land acquisition being required at all.

SCC Expenditure Approval

The FIP Board meeting on 16th June has, therefore, finally approved implementation of Options A and B as revised mainly affecting Downing Street and Castle Street (as already agreed at a previous FIP Board meeting) along with hybrid Option V affecting The Borough with an objective of implementing Option Y at a later date as and when circumstances and resources allow.

Against this background SCC's Cabinet at a meeting held on 20th June approved expenditure of £17.5 million on improvements to Farnham Town Centre of which SCC would contribute £14 million, £250,000 from Section 106 contributions and the balance being met by proposed CIL contributions

from WBC and FTC. This approval of expenditure was formally confirmed at a meeting of SCC's Full Council held on 11th July.

SCC will not, however, release their contribution of £14 million until CIL contributions from WBC and FTC are secured. At an internal update meeting held on 11th July the question has been asked as to how much FTC are being expected to contribute especially since FTC CIL funds are meant to be allocated to community projects (and indeed there is already a provisional commitment to allocate the majority of existing FTC CIL funds to improvements to Gostrey Meadow) whereas WBC CIL funds should be allocated to Strategic Projects such as FIP. The question of how much FTC would be expected to contribute has not, as yet, been answered and views and opinions of members are sought.

There are a number of other infrastructure projects in Surrey that have sought funding from SCC that have not been successful and indeed the allocation of £14 million to Farnham Town Centre is one of the largest allocations in Surrey. Obviously we would all be grateful for even greater expenditure in Farnham one has to recognise that this allocation is being made at a time of considerable financial pressures on all local authorities and with high cost inflation on the construction industry the expenditure approved by SCC must be seen as facilitating the important first step towards eventual pedestrianisation of Farnham Town Centre rather than an end in itself.

In addition to this expenditure a further £505,000 was approved for improvements to the Water Lane junction – this is funded by a CIL contribution of just under £405,000 from WBC and Section 106 contributions of £100,000.

Continuing FTC Concerns

Although thankful for the financial commitment that has now been made by SCC FTC has a number of continuing concerns over the detailed implementation of the FIP proposals in particular : --

- FTC continues to have concerns over the introduction of a right turn from Castle Street into The Borough
- The lack of any significant measures in both North and South Farnham to cope with any displaced traffic from Farnham Town Council
- The amount of street furniture (road signs, traffic lights etc) needs to be minimised particularly in the Town Centre Conservation Area. Of particular concern is the suggestion that with the section of Downing Street between Longbridge and Lower Church Lane becoming two way that the junction with Victoria Road and Union Road should be signalised – with both Victoria Road and Union Road remaining one way it is FTC's view that traffic management at this junction could be as easily managed by a small or mini roundabout rather than by traffic lights
- More effective enforcement, probably through latest generation CCTV, is required of HGV weight restrictions and the (hopefully) soon to be introduced 20mph speed limit on certain roads

With the approval of expenditure FTC will continue to pursue these concerns.

Design Work

Now that expenditure is approved more detailed design work can commence on the various schemes that have been approved in principle for implementation.

A Castle Street Parking Workshop was held virtually on Monday 10th July involving ward councillors for both WBC and SCC. A summary of the matters discussed is attached as Appendix 1. A further meeting has been scheduled to be held on Tuesday 1st August and discussions are proposed to be held with the Castle Street Residents' Association. Implementation of FIP will, however, reduce the number of parking spaces available on Castle Street and one of the detailed matters on which the views of all

members is invited is whether the space which since COVID has been allocated outside The Nelson for outside drinking and dining should continue to be provided or revert to parking.

A questionnaire is currently being distributed to all town centre businesses to provide a comprehensive updated database on their opening times and their loading and unloading requirements for deliveries.

A meeting and town centre walkabout with representatives of the Surrey Coalition of Disabled People including myself as Chair of South West Surrey Empowerment Network has been arranged for Thursday 20th July to gain the perspective of the less able community regarding the current FIP proposals.

FARNHAM LCWIP

Members will be aware the Farnham Cycling Campaign has been concerned that insufficient attention has been given to providing priorities for cyclists (and pedestrians) in the FIP proposals that are required to encourage greater use of active travel required to meet climate change objectives.

Support for encouraging greater active travel is, however, shown by the motion promoted by Cllr Catherine Powell that received all party support at the meeting of the Full Council of SCC – see Appendix 2.

The Farnham LCWIP which outlines a 10 year strategic plan to encourage greater use of active travel has now been approved which now places SCC in a position to bid for Central Government and other grants to encourage greater active travel as and when suitable opportunities arise.

Given the financial restrictions facing all local authorities the 3 SCC councillors for Farnham are arranging area consultation meetings to ensure that feasibility funding for the various outline proposals in the Farnham LCWIP is used efficiently and effectively with broad public support. The first consultation meeting for the Upper Hale area is being held at Hale Nursery and Primary Academy on Wednesday 19th July whilst the second consultation for the Weybourne area is being held at William Cobbett Primary School on Tuesday 25th July. Two further area consultation meetings are proposed covering i) the Railway Station Farnham College and Schools on Menin Way and Waverley Lane and ii) West Farnham and Wrecclesham.

BORELLI BRIDGE

The current situation regarding the Borelli Bridge remains unclear. Crest Nicholson have extant planning permission to construct a 2.5 metre wide bridge for use by both pedestrians and cyclists. Such a bridge would, however, not be compliant with revised regulations that require bridges for use by pedestrians and cyclists. This gives rise to questions of onward liability should Crest Nicholson only be prepared to construct a 2.5 metre wide bridge for which planning permission currently exists. There are also unresolved issues of overall bridge design.

16.07.23.

Cllr David Beaman

APPENDIX I :

SUMMARY OF MATTERS DISCUSSED AT CASTLE STREET PARKING WORKSHOP HELD VIRTUALLY ON MONDAY 10th July 2023

From: Jenny de Q <Jenny.Deq@farnham.gov.uk>

Dear Councillors and Town Clerk

The Castle Street Parking Workshop this afternoon with Elaine Martin, Chris Greenwood, Rich Franklin, Jack Roberts (SCC TRO) also included Councillors Beaman, Hesse, MacLeod, WBC Paul Hughes and Kelvin Mills.

The proposed changes include the loss of 12 parking bays (confirmation sought on the number of bays being removed on Bear Lane), 20 minute free bays to go, taxis relocated to ironstones outside no. 72 Castle Street, loading bay locations, areas for seating - we will receive a copy of the slides to review.

Paul Hughes spoke on the taxi rank (number of bays, location and consultation needed for any changes) and pavements licensing (correct applications and regulations and safety of diners from collision i.e. vehicles, terror attacks) and Kelvin Mills was asked by Councillor Hesse on the use of car parks for residents to mitigate street closures (Charity Bike Ride, Food Festival, Remembrance Parade and Christmas Market). At the moment parking is free from Saturday 6.30pm to 8am on Monday morning.

Councillor Hesse reminded Elaine of the UCA S106 for ironstone improvements and Elaine Martin is looking at Community CIL for street furniture.

The area outside the Nelson Arms is proposed to be retained with the addition of cycle stands to link in Active Travel/route.

Councillors Hesse and MacLeod will arrange to meet with Castle Street Residents Association to talk through proposed changes to seek support (contrary to CSRA 2021 partition to SCC).

A questionnaire for businesses to be circulated through FTC, WBC, SCC channels.

Next meeting is Tuesday 1 August at 2pm, an invitation has been sent to the same group.

MEETING OF SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

TUESDAY 11th JULY 2023

**MOTION PROPOSED BY CLLR CATHERINE POWELL,
NORTH FARNHAM DIVISION**

This Council notes that:

- Increasing cycling and walking is a key objective of this Council, this is part of the Surrey's Community Vision for 2030 and Local Transport Plan (LTP4, 2021).
- The Cabinet Member for Highways and Community Resilience has recently committed to align all existing highways policies, procedures etc., with LTP4 and bring this through scrutiny to Cabinet by the end of 2023, including the frequency of highway inspections.

This Council further notes:

- The Council's progress in developing plans to encourage walking and cycling but is aware that more needs to be done.

Therefore, this Council calls upon the Cabinet, following the review of the work of the task and finish groups by the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee, to:

- I. Review and update the Surrey Highway Hierarchy Definition to align with the sustainable travel hierarchy in LTP4 and to support a higher priority grading on routes for local walking and cycling journeys, particularly to areas of high employment, schools, hospitals, and leisure facilities. This work should be included within the review that the Cabinet Member for Highways and Community Resilience has committed to.
- II. Develop and fund a proactive maintenance approach to vegetation impacting on walking and cycling routes. This approach should prioritise areas of high employment (including town centres), schools, hospitals, and leisure facilities to ensure that these routes are consistently safe, enjoyable, easy, and convenient to use to promote them as an alternative to private vehicle use, whilst continuing to promote biodiversity.
- III. Ensure that the approach to highway inspection is extended from surveying highway defects to inspections of issues that impact on all road users (not just vehicles), for example encroaching vegetation, left-behind signs, debris on pavements and cycleways and blocked drains.
- IV. Use the knowledge of Members, local organisations and cycling and walking groups to enable the relevant officer team to create local walking and cycling maps for schools, businesses, health, and leisure facilities etc. to use within their own plans and strategies. These maps should proactively encourage sustainable travel across the county using tools such as Surrey Interactive Map.