

**Farnham Infrastructure Programme
Local Liaison Forum: Businesses
Monday 2 November 2020, 4 pm**

Present:

Cllr Wyatt Ramsdale, Surrey County Council
Cllr Andy MacLeod, Waverley Borough Council
Cllr John Neale, Farnham Town Council
Chris Tunstall, Surrey County Council
Jonathan Foster-Clark, Atkins
Peter Burch, Arcadia

Francesca Cribb, Farnham Castle
Jonathan Durham, resident and business owner
Peter Goodman, Farnham Cycle Campaign
Ken Kent, Kent's Property Ltd
Nicholas Kent, Kent's Property Ltd
Clare Laughland, Clare Laughland Interiors
Andrew Laughton, We are the Langtions
Stephana Martin, Mulberry Silks
Eddie Pearce, Farnham Herald, President Farnham Chamber of Commerce
Outi Remes, New Ashgate Gallery
Guy Singer, Farnham Walking Festival
David, Farnham Money
Toby Reynolds
Galaxy A70

In attendance

Cllr Roger Blishen, Farnham Town Council
Cllr Paula Dunsmore, Farnham Town Council
Cllr George Hesse, Farnham Town Council
Cllr Jerry Hyman, Waverley Borough Council
Cllr Liz Townsend, Waverley Borough Council, Economic Portfolio Holder

Catherine Knight, Economic Development Manager, Waverley Borough Council

Iain Lynch, Town Clerk, Farnham Town Council
Oliver Cluskey, Events Manager, Farnham Town Council
Clare Kennett, Governance and Community Engagement Manager, Farnham Town Council

Apologies: Although no specific apologies were recorded, it was noted that businesses that had registered to attend may not have been able to due to preparation for the national lockdown which was announced by the government to start on Thursday 5 November.

1. Welcome and opening remarks: Cllr Wyatt Ramsdale, Surrey County Council

Cllr Ramsdale gave an overview of the agenda and explained the meeting was an opportunity for businesses to give ideas, views and feedback to help shape the future programme. This would deepen understanding of the issues and opportunities affecting businesses in and around Farnham and how the programme is viewed by the business community. Cllr Ramsdale said

the vision statement was available for consultation until 8 November and businesses were encouraged to take part.

2. Update on the Programme – Chris Tunstall, Surrey County Council

Chris Tunstall reminded businesses to take part in the vision statement consultation, which closes on 8 November. Chris said it was important for the vision of the programme to be right for everyone who lives, works, studies or travels in Farnham and that it may change as the programme develops.

One of the key themes was to support businesses and encourage economic growth, and Chris said he was keen to hear views on how the programme could support this. Over the years many highways studies had been undertaken in and around Farnham, but few had made improvements. However, there was now a commitment from the leaders of the three Councils with the creation of the Farnham Board which had a shared vision for Farnham's future. This was combined with support from Jeremy Hunt MP.

Chris explained that the programme would be an exemplar to demonstrate what could be achieved and there were three major projects under consideration. Firstly, addressing highways issues in the town centre (including the volume of traffic, HGVs and width of footways), secondly the A31 Hickley's Corner and finally a Wrecclesham bypass.

Chris said a study of HGV movements in the town centre had been carried out and a report would be presented to the Board on 20 November. He said it was important for HGVs to deliver to businesses but not for them to use the town centre as a bypass. Chris wondered if a possible freight consolidation centre could further reduce HGVs in the town centre.

Another issue was the volume of traffic and Chris said the 2000 parking spaces close to the town centre contributed to the issue. A possible park and ride service could help alleviate the number of cars using central roads. Other solutions could involve changing the status of A roads in the town centre and introducing 20 mph speed zones.

Chris advised that an Optimised Infrastructure Plan was being prepared for consideration by the Board on 20 January, which would also be available for consultation in February and March 2021.

3. Projects and known issues affecting businesses in Farnham

Cllr Ramsdale said that the infrastructure programme would bring benefits, such as creating a better economic future for Farnham, and he was keen to hear ideas about how this could be achieved. He said that Covid-19 may have an impact on the future of the town with businesses adapting to online sales, people working from home and less commuting, and that the town centre may become a place for relaxation and entertainment.

Cllr Ramsdale said that the Brightwells and Woolmead developments were underway and there was a need to make them work, and he asked how footfall in the town centre could be increased. He recognised it would not be a short-term programme and would make many years to get the proposals right and implemented. The railway line and A31 cut Farnham in two and were not easy for traffic to cross. There were safety issues on the A325 in Wrecclesham where a relief road could prevent gridlocked traffic and avoid the low railway bridge.

Cllr Ramsdale asked members of the meeting to inform the programme of what needed to be considered for the future of Farnham.

4. Participant discussion

A list of questions and statements are available in Appendix 1.

5. Concluding remarks,

Cllr George Hesse, gave a summary of the meeting which he described as a wide-ranging, multi-faceted discussion. He said there was no simple solution but it was good that there was a forum to hear people's views. The programme would take people's thoughts forward and more Local Liaison Forums were planned in the next few weeks which were a great opportunity to consult and discuss ideas.

Although there were many issues raised which had not been resolved, it was still a work in progress and it was every encouraging and fortunate that the programme was in place for people to feed in their thinking. He was encouraged by the opportunity to work with the project team, council leaders and officers who were all working for the best interest of Farnham.

6. Thanks and next steps, Cllr Ramsdale

Cllr Ramsdale thanked everyone for attending and for their helpful contributions. He said that another business meeting might take place to allow for businesses to attend that were not able to make the meeting as a result of the forthcoming national lockdown. Cllr Ramsdale informed attendees of the next Local Liaison Forums and the topics that would be covered, as follows:

- Wednesday 25 November 2020 at 6.30 pm: Community and any Farnham residents
- Wednesday 9 December 2020 6.30 pm: Town Centre and any Farnham residents
- Wednesday 6 January 2021 at 3 pm: A31/Hickley's Corner and any Farnham residents
- Wednesday 6 January 2021 at 6.30 pm: Upper Hale and any Farnham residents
- Thursday 7 January 2021 at 6.30 pm: Wrecclesham and any Farnham residents
- Thursday 14 January 2021 at 3 pm: Young people, youth organisers and school leaders.

Meeting closed at 6 pm.

Appendix 1

4. Participant discussion

Name/organisation	Question/comment	Answer
Stefana Martin, Mulberry Silks	In recent times, there have been fewer people using Hickley's Corner and experience of daily travel has proved that there is not a traffic issue here. Could the money be used instead for a western bypass which would be better than building a road underneath/above Hickley's Corner.	<p>Cllr Ramsdale said that there may be a perception of reduced traffic at this time, but new housing developments nearby would have an impact over time. Funding was also an issue and the money identified for Hickley's Corner would not be enough for a western bypass.</p> <p>Chris Tunstall said that the study in 2004 for Hickley's Corner would not meet current assessment criteria and that the programme team were relooking at the project. It is important that any future infrastructure change improves connectivity.</p>
On Zoom chat	What are the timescales for the programme?	<p>Chris Tunstall said the HGV study would go to the Farnham Board on 20 November when options would be discussed. Any improvements would be implemented quickly, although there was a statutory process to go through including consultation and applying for a Traffic Regulation Order.</p> <p>The Optimised Infrastructure Plan would be going to the Board in January which would be consulted on in February and March 2021, and possibly implemented by late 2021. The whole programme was expected to take 15 years, although improvements to the town centre may be implemented in three to four years.</p>
Jonathan Durham,	The planters and cones along the central roads (installed in March in response to the Covid-19 pandemic) are killing the town. The town is gridlocked and traffic cannot flow which impacts on air quality. Support should be given to businesses during this time, not killing their trade.	<p>Cllr Wyatt said that this was one view but not representative of all businesses and residents who requested the measures to increase the size of pavements to allow for social distancing and space or queues outside shops.</p> <p>Chris Tunstall said that he was aware of the issues and that a change in the road system was going to be made shortly so that Downing Street had priority and traffic was held on West Street which would allow traffic to flow better from central car parks. The</p>

		<p>traffic cones and planters were installed to allow for wider pavements and social distancing during the pandemic.</p>
<p>Guy Singer, Farnham Walking Festival</p>	<p>There is adverse public opinion about the planters and cones and many negative comments have been posted on Facebook about them. They taint everything that the Farnham Infrastructure Programme is trying to do and many people in the town centre are upset about them. Some of the signs still say that they are temporary until 20 September and so no one knows what is happening with them.</p>	<p>Chris Tunstall said that orcas (semi-permanent black and white rubber 'fins' which are a familiar kerb face to drivers) were to be installed shortly to replace the cones and some planters. They would be more aesthetically pleasing to the street scene.</p> <p>Chris asked businesses what they would like the programme to achieve, as Farnham's poor air quality was to do with the volume of traffic in the narrow streets of the town centre. Chris said that it was unlikely to get any better unless steps to address the issues were taken.</p> <p>Chris asked members what they thought of pedestrianising streets.</p>
<p>Peter Goodman, Farnham Cycle Campaign</p>	<p>Do CCTV cameras capture the amount of traffic going through the town?</p>	<p>Cllr Wyatt Ramsdale said that a study had recently been carried out to show HGV movements, but it did not include cycles. The results would be presented to the Board on 20 November.</p> <p>Chris Tunstall said that it was important to keep vehicles that stopped but not those that passed through the centre. It was difficult to do a proper study.. In normal circumstances, vehicles would be stopped and asked their destination. Information since Covid-19 was available but it was not reliable data as there had been changes in the number of vehicle movements. It was possible to check number plates and the length of time it took to travel through the town using cameras.</p> <p>Jonathan Foster-Clark said that the programme team was looking at the figures from last year and using this to make judgements on the current situation.</p> <p>Chris Tunstall asked attendees again about the future look at feel of the Farnham town centre. He said the ease of getting in and out of Farnham was important, and he asked what businesses thought</p>

		about pedestrianisation. Chris quoted a scheme in another town where businesses were initially against pedestrianisation. However, most were now in favour as it had benefited accessibility people being able to use the town.
Clare Laughland, Clare Laughland Interiors	<p>The planters and cones have choked the town and all clients are saying that they are preventing them coming into the town. In terms of pedestrianisation, there is no rear access to the shop on Downing Street and all deliveries must come in at the front.</p> <p>A café culture in Farnham would be welcomed but roads need to be dealt with first and businesses would like to know the alternative solutions that would be put in place.</p>	<p>Chris Tunstall said that pedestrianisation would not mean that shops would be prevented from being serviced. There could be shared access or deliveries at certain times of the day.</p> <p>Chris asked attendees what they thought of a freight consolidation centre with small electric vans or cargo bikes that delivered to the town centre.</p> <p>Chris said one of the issues was the 2000 car parking spaces in the town centre and possible park and ride facilities could encourage people to access the town differently, as well as possible road user charging scheme. The issue of one lane and narrow footways on The Borough was out of their control, although changing the give way priority on Downing Street and West Street may have a positive impact in the coming weeks.</p>
Peter Goodman, Farnham Cycle Campaign	<p>There is a need to see the models first before we can comment. It is important to make changes now as businesses are finding the current economic climate challenging and more needs to be done to support them. Can anything be done quicker as even 12 months is a long time to wait and many independents might struggle in the next year. Is it also possible to put cycle paths in?</p>	<p>Chris said that they were looking at improved provision for cycling in the town centre but that it would not happen over-night. In addition, reallocating road space for cyclists at this stage would reduce space available for cars even further and that a longer-term solution was needed. Phase 1 of the programme was looking at 'quick wins' for the town centre. Phase 2 of the programme would start from 2022 and look at issues such as pedestrianisation. The programme team was waiting to hear back from the government about funding.</p> <p>Cllr John Neale explained that the purpose of the meeting was to hear businesses ideas for the vision of the town centre. He asked if they would like it to stay the same or if they would like it to change, and that this information would help develop the programme.</p>
Clare Laughland, Clare Laughland Interiors	<p>Businesses are adapting with more online shopping, but independents still rely on people coming into the town.</p>	<p>Cllr John Neale said he would like feedback from businesses about how to make it work.</p>

	Farnham's World Craft status is a selling point but people are fearful about Brightwells and the retailers who may occupy the stores. Creative thinking is required to make Farnham a vibrant place.	
Stefana Martin, Mulberry Silks	Businesses still need the central car parks and removing them would only force people online. The range of independent shops in Farnham were much better than those available in other local towns and cities, and it is a place where you can meet a friend for lunch and go to a range of different shops. Female clients were more likely to use their cars and unlikely to want to cycle.	Cllr Watt Ramsdale said that residents had said to him that would rather go to other towns because of Farnham's congestion, which had been made worse recently due to traffic works. Emergency gas works were being carried out as well as urgent Surrey County Council Highways works. All these are coordinated and planned but sometimes they need to go ahead in an emergency situation which unfortunately has an impact on the town.
Nicholas Kent, Kent's Property Ltd	Riverside car park is never full and more publicity about it would encourage people to park there. It is unlikely that people will cycle to go shopping. The planters and cones are stopping the traffic from flowing and there was a need an urgent need to help businesses survive in the current economic climate.	
Catherine Knight, Economic Development Manager, Waverley Borough Council	Recent data shows that shoppers in Farnham spend £100 on average at each visit to the town including eating out. Farnham is a destination and it is important that people can walk around safely. WBC is looking at what it can do to support businesses over the next year which will be a difficult environment for many.	Cllr Wyatt Ramsdale said that it was also important to support larger businesses, not just independents. For example, a new development in Rushmoor was being proactive in supporting the University for the Creative Arts and there was a need to protect Farnham's assets.
Jonathan Durham	Can the cones and planters be removed as they are making delivery of items to	Chris Tunstall said that when he first visited Farnham, he could not believe how badly affected it was by traffic. It may be that there

	<p>Smallbones butchers difficult. In addition, the HGV that delivers to Robert Dyas parks in the road which blocks it and it is breaking up the pavement edges. A delivery vehicle for the Fish and Chip shop recently parked in the car park and got a parking fine.</p>	<p>would be a short-term pain for long-term gain, but he thought solutions to improve the town centre were needed. It was possible to put some delivery bays into the central car park to help businesses.</p>
<p>Cllr Paula Dunsmore, Farnham Town Council</p>	<p>Cllr Dunsmore said she had been canvassing businesses in Wrecclesham and they were against a bypass as they relied on through traffic. There were keen on reducing the speed of traffic through the village. There has been some success with the Speedwatch Group in recent years, but the police had not enforced speeding on a permanent basis. It appeared that many speeding drivers were residents and locals.</p>	<p>Chris Tunstall said that a 20 mph zone could be considered in Wrecclesham as part of the programme.</p>
<p>Cllr Wyatt Ramsdale, Surrey County Council</p>	<p>Cllr Wyatt Ramsdale said that technology could charge drivers for passing through the town centre, but it could also possibly give free parking.</p>	<p>Chris Tunstall said that in York people were priced out of parking in the city centre, except for locals, which encouraged use of park and ride facilities. A road user charging scheme could give free car parking for those using businesses and this would be looked at as part of the programme.</p> <p>Chris said that changing the give way priority in the town centre was likely to have a positive impact and that the planters and cones were necessary for Covid-19 issues. It was interesting to see that a café culture had developed on Castle Street, which was working well, and that Farnham was a destination with a great environment.</p>
<p>Ken Kent, Kent's Property Ltd</p>	<p>The recent traffic jams have been caused by highways works on local roads. Is it possible for the County Council to cut grass and carry out other road maintenance during the night?</p>	<p>Cllr Wyatt Ramsdale said that he would propose this to the County Council.</p>

Other matters raised in the Meeting chat

- Please don't forget the problems caused by the level crossing when talking about the town being split in two
- It has been suggested that at the top of Downing Street the give way should be changed
- Most of the people we talk to love the planters as looks happier than Guildford.
- Rightly or wrongly we are advised that Farnham is just a pass through with most of the traffic not visiting the town - is this your opinion?
- Parking in the town can be a nightmare when there are events in the town and at the Maltings - this is more so at the weekends and the roads around Farnham are grid locked historically - before Covid
- Could shuttle bus be the answer?
- Concern over suggestion to take the parking out on Station Hill? Goodbye Barbers, Convenience store and Chinese takeaway, three more empty shops.
- The craft town is a unique opportunity to compete with online giants.
- People have always gone to Guildford which now has lots of empty shops
- WBC have bid for £65,000 some ecargo bikes
- We want people to visit but what are the businesses vision, what will help that? It needs a creative consultation.
- I suggest we look at Frome as a model, it is an independent town full of independents which is thriving
- It's too dark at Riverside for parking
- I do think people are sensible enough to navigate narrow pavements
- Would it be possible to discuss the proposed ideas to deal with Hickleys Corner/ the bypass, the Wrecclesham Bypass at another time, these feel like bigger issues ?

- The idea you mentioned about cycle couriers from a central delivery area, sound very interesting
- Robert Dyas drivers come in early to central car park when they can. We could create an unloading bay for them and other commercial vehicles there
- To encourage people to spend longer in town, Pay on Exit parking was proposed to the WBC Parking Review last year - went nowhere unfortunately. I still think it would help trade
- People are often rushing out of my showroom before their parking runs out
- There is no time limit when people cycle into town, and parking is free. Some of the reasons why shops on a street with a cycle track see a 30-50% increase in trade. Based on Government research.
- What's the possibility of a survey done by people in Hi Viz and clip boards asking all the truckers and drivers stuck inter cars where they are coming from and going to