Farnham Infrastructure Programme Local Liaison Forum, Wednesday 10 March 2021 Optimised Infrastructure Plan Consultation Businesses

Present

Cllr Wyatt Ramsdale, Chair, Waverley Borough Council Cllr Andy MacLeod, Waverley County Council Cllr Stephen Spence, Surrey County Council Chris Tunstall, Surrey County Council Jonathan Foster-Clark, Atkins Alex Pye, Atkins Paula Gough, Arcadis Peter Burch, Arcadis Iain Lynch, Town Clerk, Farnham Town Council Clare Kennett, Farnham Town Council

17 members of the public were present.

I. Welcome and opening remarks

Cllr Ramsdale welcomed businesses to the Local Liaison Forum (LLF) to discuss proposals outlined in the Optimised Infrastructure Plan (OIP) which was available for consultation until 14 March. Cllr Ramsdale outlined proceedings for the meeting and how people could ask a question or make a comment which would be considered as part of the consultation.

Cllr Ramsdale explained that the three councils, Surrey, Waverley and Farnham, had worked together to develop the programme. Cllr Ramsdale said that Chris Tunstall would be leaving the programme soon, to be replaced by Simon Duke, and thanked him for his valuable contribution. Cllr Ramsdale introduced other members of the panel, including Paula Gough, Jonathan Foster-Clark, Alex Pye and Iain Lynch.

Cllr Ramsdale said the last LLF for businesses had been held in November 2020 and the meeting had taken place at the same time as the beginning of the second national lockdown, which may have prevented people from attending. It had been agreed to hold another meeting for businesses to ensure their contribution to the programme. Cllr Ramsdale said he was interested to hear from businesses how the programme could make a difference.

2. Update from the programme

Chris Tunstall explained the role of consultation in the development of the programme and showed a diagram that indicated the process that was being followed. He said that feedback received on the draft OIP would enable the development of schemes and the creation of a strategic business case which would be available for consultation later in the year. Chris Tunstall explained the information on the presentation slides was only the key headlines and that full details of the consultation was available on the website.

Chris Tunstall said that Farnham was an attractive town, but the centre was dominated by cars and associated congestion and air pollution. The A31 divided the town into two and any disruption on this road caused congestion in the town centre. There were also narrow roads and pavements. He said it was time to do something about it, and there was a common vision and goal between the three councils and Jeremy Hunt MP to drive transformational change through the OIP. The

programme wanted to hear from businesses about how change could improve Farnham. Chris Tunstall said the vision that was developed in 2020 underpinned the programme. He said the programme was not anti-car but it was about looking at how other options could be provided.

Jonathan Foster-Clark gave an overview of the presentation boards and encouraged attendees to look at the information on the consultation website if they had not already done so.

Jonathan Foster-Clark explained the current situation and said Farnham had a strong economy with a highly-skilled population and high levels of economic activity. The town centre was characterised by heavy traffic, HGVs, narrow pavements, severance issues and poor air quality. The A31 and the railway line caused severance between north and south of the town and it was heavily congested at Hickley's Corner. A significant challenge was high car dependency for all journeys and low uptake of public transport. Walking was popular for shorter journeys, but cycling was less popular, possibly to do with the topography and because the road network was busy. HGVs impacted on local communities, particularly in the town centre, north Farnham and Wrecclesham. It was important to look to the future as significant growth was forecast over the next 30 years with a projected significant increase in traffic. Without action, carbon emissions would not reduce at the speed required by national legislation and congestion would continue to be an issue.

Jonathan Foster-Clark said that four key objectives had been identified for the OIP including rapidly reducing carbon emissions (a UK legal requirement to meet net zero by 2050); creating well-connected communities to provide effective choices to help meet economic and day-to-day needs; supporting Farnham's economy (there was a danger post-Covid of levelling down and people needed to think about what could be done to develop a vibrant and dynamic shopping and hospitality environment); and improving quality of place and reducing the impact of traffic on local communities.

Jonathan Foster-Clark said an integrated approach had been applied to developing the OIP, including the town centre to create a strategy that ensured high-quality public spaces; improvements to integrate walking routes from new development areas; major improvements to walking and cycling; major changes to town centre road layout, improvements to the walking experience; better management of car parking, review of existing car parks, new 'park and ride/stride' sites; new public transport hubs; review of bus services; off-street locations for deliveries; and new freight consolidation centres.

Jonathan Foster-Clark said the possible options for North Farnham included traffic management measures; improved walking and cycling including segregated routes through Badshot Lea and Weybourne, and new/improved routes through Farnham Park; wider pavements and narrower roads; investigating and enhancing bus services and infrastructure e.g. A325 Farnborough Road Corridor; working closely with Hampshire County Council to ensure seamless travel; initial assessment on the potential benefits of a Western Bypass; and 'quick wins' to tackle the impacts of HGVs and speeding traffic were being progressed.

Jonathan Foster-Clark said possible options for South Farnham included further studies for Wrecclesham, including investigation for a bypass; schemes for improved walking and cycling; further studies of the station area and ways to tackle severance from the town centre; potential options to reduce traffic using the level crossing; new bus routes and better bus infrastructure through Wrecclesham; and 'quick wins' would also be progressed to reduce the impact of speeding traffic.

Jonathan Foster-Clark said that more study work to assess the A31 corridor was required to develop a programme of improvements. This included addressing the challenges at Hickley's Corner; full integration with town centre and South Farnham proposals; junction improvement packages for Coxbridge roundabout, Hickley's Corner, and Shepheard and Flock roundabout; and improvements at the level crossing. They would be investigating a wide range of options that could solve the problems facing this area.

Jonathan Foster-Clark explained there were a range options for Farnham as a whole to support travel choice including the creation of a travel app and introducing car clubs; working with schools to increase walking and cycling; improved footpaths, priority streets, new crossing points; improved paths and cycle parking in the town centre and other key locations; hire or subsidised purchase of e-bikes and e-scooters; piloting and then rolling out low traffic neighbourhoods; improved bus stops and services using electric and ultra-low emission buses; and review of fares and routes.

3. Seeking your views

Cllr Ramsdale asked if the programme was getting it right and he was interested in hearing the views of businesses. He asked if the needs of businesses had been addressed in the OIP and did they support the proposed options. Would the OIP proposals encourage businesses, employees and customers change their travel behaviour? What were their insights for the future – would the OIP support business development or improve Farnham as a destination town post-Covid?

4. Participant discussion

A list of questions and statements are attached at Appendix 1. Questions asked through the meeting Q&A feature are attached at Appendix 2.

5. Closing remarks

Cllr Ramsdale said he thought they had met the objectives set at the beginning of the meeting. It had been interesting to hear from businesses that the status quo could not continue from a customer and visitor perspective. It was likely that the quick wins and the suggestion about the station car park could be completed in the very near future. He said supporting options for businesses, car parking and changing behaviours may need to be incentivised with alternatives before changes were made. He liked the point about holiday opportunities, tapping into the potential for tourism and creating a destination town. They were looking at what was happening elsewhere and using that information. Reducing traffic and thinking about accessibility was important, as well as getting businesses and people back in the recovery period after Covid. Cllr Ramsdale said he had worked closely with Cllr MacLeod and Cllr Spence to develop the programme so far and this was the last public meeting before the County Council election in May.

Cllr MacLeod thanked attendees for joining the meeting, the panellists for delivering the presentation and answering questions, and the officers who worked to support the meeting. Even though a smaller number of participants had attended, there had still been a good and valuable discussion to support the consultation. Cllr MacLeod thanked Chris Tunstall for his contribution to the programme and said that Simon Duke would be replacing him. He also thanked Cllr Ramsdale for chairing the meeting. There would be three new county councillors supporting the programme following the election.

Cllr MacLeod said the consultation would finish on 14 March and responses would be considered to develop the OIP. The next step would be in May/June when possible schemes would be considered. Further LLFs would be organised after the election to continue the discussion with people in Farnham.

Meeting closed at 8.30pm.

Appendix I

4. Participant discussion: Questions asked during the meeting and answered by the panellists

Name	Question/Comment	Answer
Peter Goodman	Most people would agree that businesses in central Farnham were being strangled by the traffic. Giving people an extra option of getting into the town more easily was needed. Why was it that it would be at least three years before options such as new cycle tracks were developed in the town centre?	Chris Tunstall said they were looking at doing things quickly, for example the HGV restriction, road speeds and also 'quick wins' for cycle tracks (Scholars Way in Farnham Park). They were looking at opportunities. The key was to make sure that whatever was done now, was integrated into future major schemes so that it was not wasted work.
	He did not think HGV restrictions would encourage people to	
	start cycling and many would wait until a proper cycle path was in place, which according to the project timescales, would be in 2024.	Paula Gough said they were in the consultation process and interventions could only be progressed once they had been agreed and refined. Then they could communicate a more detailed programme of activity with everybody. That was the next phase, and, in the meantime, they could do the quick wins.
		Cllr Ramsdale said they had to be aware of unintended consequences. They still needed to work up the individual schemes and they all needed to be integrated.
		Paula Gough said this part of the programme aimed to be completed by 2024. They needed to look at how they were changing the road space to identify how walking and cycling options would be fit within that. This was a priority element of the programme.
		Jonathan Foster-Clark said they were aware of the large economic and health benefits of walking and cycling infrastructure, as well as the evidence of benefits to retail.
Damien Blower	What did you mean by businesses? There were also landlords, tenants, national chains, local businesses or was it for people who run businesses. How were they categorised? What kind	Cllr Ramsdale said everyone was welcome to join the meeting take part in the consultation. They were doing as much as possible to encourage people and all business owners to attend.

	of businesses did they need to attract to make Farnham a successful and resilient town?	Chris Tunstall said anyone who runs a business was invited to attend and get involved. Leaflets and an e-newsletter had been sent to all businesses in Farnham, invitations had been circulated by
	A client, who owned a restaurant chain, said that Farnham had a density and depth of wealth that not one of his other 29 restaurants matched. Farnham had a unique situation and	partner organisations, and it had been widely promoted in the local press and on social media.
	people could afford to eat out regularly. There was an opportunity for the town as there was a lot of disposable income. There was a huge change for the major chains and a revolution was coming which would require landlords to invest in their premises. It would also require an active and	Cllr MacLeod said that businesses were busy at the moment and this may have affected participation at meetings. More may engage at the next stage when proposals were drawn up and a targeted approach was undertaken at consulting with them.
	engaged local government who was prepared to support businesses and invest in buildings and public space. The quality of retail space in London was high. Landlords had underinvested in town centre retail space and Farnham could not afford to continue in that way. There was a need to create a more attractive town centre to make the most of the wealth that was there. The alternative to pedestrianisation was a dying town and he urged the OIP to proceed at pace to prepare Farnham for the revolution that was about to happen. Pedestrianisation was needed to prejudice the driver and	Cllr Ramsdale said the programme team agreed with him and the status quo could not be left as it was.
	encourage pedestrians to walk to the town to spend their disposable income.	
Toby Reynolds	Agreed with Damien Blower. Within the local area there were case studies on pedestrianisation, for example Leatherhead and Godalming. These were all fantastic concepts, but he was concerned about creating ghost towns. He wanted reassurance that case studies had been looked at	Cllr Ramsdale said he would also like to hear from the big retailers and hoped they had taken part in the consultation. Professional experts and experienced members of the team working on the programme who were well aware of the schemes in other areas.
	and that proper insight was being carried out to ensure they made a positive impact. He would be interested to hear from supermarkets and big retailers to find out their insights.	Chris Tunstall said there had been a 27% drop in footfall generally across the UK since the early 2000s. There was 37% increase in footfall where there had been pedestrianisation. Looking at options for pedestrianisation was part of the process.
	With regards to car parking, some people thought there was not enough in Farnham. If there was pedestrianisation, would	Alex Pye said there was a lot of national research and the Living Streets study (the pedestrian pound) looked at academic research

more parking be available on the outskirts but close enough that people could access the town?	 and case studies. Overall, where interventions had worked well they had created an increase in footfall. Not just about pedestrianisation, but also about investment in the public realm and environment. Alex Pye said he would share the link to the research. Jonathan Foster-Clark said following Covid there would be challenges for town centres across the country. Those that had a distinctive offer and a quality experience would do better with bringing people into the town. Farnham had a great offer and disposable income but they needed to create a place that people wanted to walk around and access facilities. Needed to create the physical environment that people would want to circulate around otherwise there would be a missed opportunity. Paula Gough said there was a lot of thought leadership about what
	retail and leisure would look like. Leisure was considered to be the saviour to high streets, as well as boutique shopping, arts and crafts which was strong in Farnham. The consultation was an opportunity for businesses to share thoughts on what could be developed to improve the programme. Cllr Ramsdale said that they would ensure that car parking would
	work. Jonathan Foster-Clark said that analysis showed that all of the town centre was accessible from at least two car parks. There was a multiplicity of car parks serving the town centre and walking accessibility was high. There was a high level of parking availability in Farnham compared to other comparable towns. When they were looking at how car parks were better managed, they were not going to stop people getting into the town centre. They were looking at how they can better use the space and enable people to park as easily as possible. Forcing people to use the one-way system was not be the best option as forced people to use a specific car park. They would be looking at options for the best car park.

		Chris said they were not going to consider moving car parks out of the centre that would impact on people with mobility issues or impact on shops getting deliveries.
Lucy Wills	Business based in Farnham and delighted that this work was going ahead. It was important to consider mobility and accessibility, such as making spaces welcoming for people, including those with cognitive issues and impairments that could prevent them from accessing spaces. This included signage and how people moved around a space. Also, there were some brilliant technology businesses who were working remotely. How could they enable more people to work from home and commute less while supporting businesses to perform better? They could build on local successes and use what had been learnt during lockdown about how powerful businesses could be. There was a potential to bring back public transport and unwind some of what had happened. It was important to find a way forward without penalising businesses and help people get around while protecting the natural environment. Farnham was a beautiful place to live and there were so many visitors/tourists.	Jonathan Foster-Clark said there was an opportunity to connect local tourist sites and the heritage and historical aspects. Technology could contribute to the programme, along with channelling the energies of local companies. Technology could help overcome some of the challenges Farnham faced, for example e- scooters, new apps to help people understand the travel choices available and supporting new business start-ups. This was something they would be looking to explore more. Alex Pye said that the programme would be made accessible for all and there was a duty to do this. They used technology which allowed them to work in 3D and see how people with different disabilities would experience schemes.
Cllr Jerry Hyman	Run businesses in Farnham for last 25 years and have much experience. Concerned that not many people have had chance to contribute. Everyone wants better pedestrian conditions in Farnham but for the last 25 years, alternative routes had been needed first. The County Council was seeing it as road space reallocation without alternative routes first and there was a lot of anxiety that town centre residents would not be able to get around by car. Restrictions would gridlock the town. The OIP did not consider the current situation as Brightwells had consent for roads schemes that were not included. Could the results of Brightwell's park and stride study be shared? Concerned about unintended consequences. What was needed was the modelling and the 2019 results/data from the North Brook park development, but it could not be validated	Paula Gough said the park and stride work as part of Brightwells did not go forward and was not carried out. When more information on this was available, this could be shared. The OIP made a number of suggestions and proposals, and feedback from the consultation would be considered. These would then be drawn up into schemes and proposals, and strategic modelling would be applied. Professionals were working on the programme who understood transport modelling and they needed to do this work. By the next Board, there would be a detailed programme of the next steps. The strategic model for Surrey County Council would be available in June. Chris Tunstall said his understanding was that the North Brook data had been put into a model and it had been verified. The HGV

	until that amount of traffic was running again. So there was not a model to start with. Everyone wanted improved pedestrian conditions but there was a need for people to get into the town in their cars. This could not be done quickly as there was not a validated base model to work from and solutions could not be tested. They did not have a year to talk about it and solutions were needed, along with being straight with people as to when things would happen.	restriction and 20mph study did not require the model as the evidence was clear. There were things that could be done without a model. The model they had was the best they have got and the best they could use. Jonathan Foster-Clark said the data had been validated based on ANPR surveys from 2019. It was regarded and treated by transport experts as a validated model and a robust basis of the assessment of schemes in Farnham. This model would be used in the coming months to establish the impacts of different traffic managing arrangements in the town centre. No model was perfect because it would take five years to develop by which time it would be out of date. There needed to be an element of pragmatism to enable the work to go ahead. Further work would take place over the next year to develop a more detailed model for complicated schemes such as Hickley's Corner.
Tim Clark	Thank you for the presentations. Jerry's concerns were the reflections of what a lot of people worried about in Farnham - people were afraid of change. Impressed with the OIP. There was a need to create a place to go in town which could be enjoyed. People with children and older people holding up lines of traffic to get across road was a worry and it should not be happening. There was a need to put a priority towards pedestrians as discussed earlier in the meeting. There was an opportunity in the town centre to use upper floors of shops as accommodation as there was a major housing problem in the town centre and this would help businesses and help people get an affordable home. Useful to focus on businesses because the economy of Farnham is dependent on success of businesses.	 Cllr Ramsdale said living above retail was being considered. Brightwells would also bring new residents to the centre of town. Alex Pye said it was a valid suggestion and this had been done in schemes in other towns. It was crucial and best practice to create a place for people to enjoy the town, including green infrastructure for physical/mental health and wellbeing. This would be integrated as part of the programme. Paula Gough said this was reflected in the vision around place making for local communities. This was well-established into the programme and was a key focus. Cllr Stephen Spence said some of the key points made in the meeting so far were important. Nothing had changed in Farnham for the last 50 years and there was now an opportunity to make that change happen, but it had to be done properly. With Brightwells, conversations were starting about a 'Plan B' if the commercial rents were not taken up at the expected level. A

		cultural hub, with the UCA, Watts Gallery and cinema, that was linked and connected to the town would start to make Farnham thrive. There was a need to sort out traffic, and that could be done, and then there were many possibilities for the town in the future. He said it had been a very positive conversation so far.
George Murray	A suggestion to install steps at the back of the station car park to the approach road or Firgrove Hill so that people did not have to walk down the little road with no path. He was fully supportive of the OIP and hoped that it could be fast-tracked. He owned the coffee shop in Lion and Lamb yard which he thought was everything that Farnham should be -	Cllr Ramsdale said the station car park was owned by Network Raid. A plan to open up the far end of the car park had been suggested before, but they blocked it due to liability. Delighted if the programme team could take this on again as part of wider discussions with them. Please write to councillors if you think more could be done to support businesses.
	pedestrianisation, heritage, people living above the shops and a wonderful place to be. However, 50% of the shops and businesses were not open and were empty. Covid was a temporary situation, and he was optimistic about the future, but he was concerned about the longer-term, the empty shops and if businesses would come back. Support from the government had been vital but how would businesses come back strong? It was a worry and could be a long struggle. The programme was not involved in this but the two were connected.	Chris Tunstall said they would discuss the issue about the railway station car park with Network Rail to see what was possible. Station approach was privately owned but a footway was a good idea and it could be adopted by the County Council. He thought things might get back to normal post-Covid but certain chains might not appear again, probably those that were already suffering before Covid. There had been a move was towards online shopping and they needed to take account of that. Everything they were doing would be focused on supporting the economy and businesses.
		Cllr MacLeod said it would be excellent if the station approach road could become part of the highway. The land next to the car park was owned by the County Council so there was room to widen the road and put in a pavement. This was part of the original Hickley's Corner scheme. They were all in agreement of improving the town centre and that it had to happen. Moving around the town was a barrier, particularly for those in north Farnham. He had every confidence that the team would be able to do it. Had to be done and the town would deteriorate if programme did not go ahead.
		Paula Gough said they were speaking to Network Rail and they would be looking at station approach and how to make the area around it more accessible and attractive. Also, to guide people

		across to Brightwells and create a more sensible approach into the
Sylvia Schuller	We own the bookshop at The Borough and we love your ideas. One question, deliveries – we have many of those during the seven days a week (when open). Since lockdown and the Covid road measures, we have experienced difficulties with deliveries.	town. Jonathan Foster-Clark said over the last year there had been a reduction in car traffic but similar levels of HGVs managing deliveries and meeting essential needs. There was therefore a perception in the town that HGVs were prominent. They were looking at how they could better deal with deliveries with the Covid measures in place.
		Alex Pye said that footway widening could be combined with timed loading pads so that in the morning, when there is not as much footfall, those spaces were off carriageway to create a safe space for vehicles to load/unload. They were also looking at longer-term measures such as freight consolidation centres away from the town centre so that the HGVs were not clogging up the streets and deliveries could still be made.
		lain Lynch said that there was no loading between 8-6 in The Borough and during the Covid measures additional space had been made available. There may be more opportunity going forward, if the footways were widened, on a more permanent basis. Successful deliveries and businesses for the town was vital for the future and hoped there was reassurance that the measures being put forward were business focused.
		Chris Tunstall said that space for deliveries could be incorporated into the central car parks which would relieve some pressure on The Borough. This could be moved to businesses by electric vehicles and cargo bikes etc. However, this was just an idea and a decision had not been made yet. Deliveries were high on the agenda and the best options would be put in place.
Tim Clark	York was a good example of how people overcame delivery problems. It was just a case of getting the timing worked out.	Cllr Ramsdale said that they would need to ensure the people followed the new times.

4. Participant discussion. Questions asked at the webinar using the Q&A function and answered by panellists.

Appendix 2

	Question/Comment	Answer
Ι.	Jocelyn Close: I run a transport and companionship business, Driving Miss Daisy, our clients are an average age of 80 with very limited mobility. Presently we drop them right outside the hairdressers / opticians / dentists as they can only walk a few steps with our assistance. How would they reach their destinations in future if the town was pedestrianised please?	Thanks for your question. We obviously need to understand these issues that people face in developing the potential options and solutions. All schemes must be assessed for their impacts on different groups: we will ensure that these will be taken into account as we develop the schemes.
2.	George Murray: A quick fix would be to build some steps from the Station car park to Approach Road or Firgrove Hill. This would enable people to walk down Firgrove Hill into town.	George. I will take that onboard. Many thanks
3.	George Murray: Is there a plan to build a road link from Castle Street to the Hart Car park?	That is a possible option that is being examined and considered.
4.	John Chesterman, Bush Hotel: We are enthusiastic supporters of the Vision and the momentum you are building. We will have somewhere between 35-40,000 visitors staying a year with an average stay of 1.5 days. The most common comment is they love the town and surroundings but would have stayed a lot longer if the traffic could be sorted with all the additional financial spin off benefits this could bring. We are keen to play our part on the detailed phase you are now progressing to. Question: what is the best forum for us to feedback to you as you work up your options? David Howell: For the sake of those attending can the board explain	Hi John, would be great to get your thoughts and input. Appreciate the online consultation may not be the ideal platform for longer inputs, questions, suggestions; we've set up a centralised email for the programme - if you're keen to send in more detailed thoughts, questions, suggestions, it is Farnham.InfrastructureProgramme@surreycc.gov.uk Stayed at the Bush last Summer and despite the restrictions was well look after. In terms of contacting us could you use farnham.infrastructureprogramme@surreycc.gov.uk Hope this is helpful. I will answer it live if that's ok.
	the proposals for deliveries to their shops and businesses.	
6.	George Murray: As a coffee shop owner, I heartily agree with Damien	Good to know because there are some who believe things should be simply left to the cars to get on with it. That is good to know and we are aligned in the Programme Team. Please send more of your thoughts to the team via consultation platform.
7.	Lucy Wills: Very much agree re decarbonization and introducing pedestrian areas. I am starting a healthcare and wellness business and potential retreat venue and the heritage and prestige of Farnham in a near countryside setting is a big draw. We do also need to	We can answer live if that's ok.

	consider accessibility and making sure that disabled and elderly people can still access the centre of town easily. Can we hear more about these aspects?	
8.	Lucy Wills: My business is one of the many technology-led enterprises in the area. Can we do more to highlight the tech and service innovation in Farnham as well as the craft?	This is an area of focus nationally but would be good to know your thoughts on how FIP can support your business.
		Fantastic question Lucy! Tech innovation will be a key aspect of the future of the town - we are well aware of this and will highlight it more. And new tech solutions can support future travel needs, e.g., mobility as a service apps, systems for e-scooter hire etc.
5.	Sylvia Schüller. We own the bookshop at The Borough and we love your ideas - one question, deliveries - we have many of those during the 7 days a week (when open). Since the lockdown and the covid road measures we have experienced difficulties with deliveriesapologies in advance, my mic is not working :) happy to just listen if you can answer. Just to add our deliveries are in a UPS truck - delivering books. Awesome, thank you - most of the time the drivers park up in the Castle Street as long as they can deliver, I am happy. Thank you for the answers! Central car park is also a good option :) it would be lovely for our visitor to enjoy their coffee or wine without the fumeso what you are proposing is a bliss!	Answered live at the meeting. Please do also give your thoughts on the consultation website too!