

Farnham Infrastructure Programme

Farnham Town Council (FTC) Response to Optimised Infrastructure Plan (Draft February 2021)

Executive Summary

FTC's Response was ratified by Council on 17th March 2021. The full response is available at: [FTC-OIP-Consultation-Response-March-2021.pdf \(farnham.gov.uk\)](#). This is a summary.

FTC represents all areas of the town and regards them as equal. As in the Plan itself, FTC has focussed on the Town Centre aspects first (as these elements are likely to be the lead projects), followed by the neighbourhood aspects, and finally the Major Road Network (MRN) aspects, which are at a preliminary stage and FTC would expect to return to these matters at a later date.

Where FTC has not commented on the options and proposals outlined in the OIP, it is generally content with the direction of the Plan. The areas highlighted in its response are where it has concerns relating to the Plan or wishes to suggest how options should be considered. Several key principles predicate FTC's response:

- A western link road (incorporating a Wrecclesham bypass).
- Pedestrian focus for Farnham as a destination town is essential, with wider footways and increased pedestrian space to improve the shoppers' experience.
- Mitigating the impacts of congestion and poor air quality.
- Creating a transport hub around the station may obviate the need for the proposed Hickley's investment.

Town Centre

The treatment of the town centre within the OIP is fundamental to the future of the town, not only in respect to what it provides to the community, but also to the economic health of the town's economy. There is general agreement that pedestrians need to be better provided for and at the expense of vehicle convenience if needs be.

FTC recommends that the OIP includes designs and modelling for a phased implementation of a pedestrian zone in the town centre that mitigates against any adverse impacts that may be expected. Other measures should be introduced first so that the town is not adversely impacted.

FTC recommends:

- Creation of a pedestrian zone that could include southern section of Castle Street (from St George's Yard), eastern section of West Street (from ex Post Office building), The Borough, western section of East Street (from Threadneedle Street – this is the delivery road for Brightwells, one-way northerly), Downing Street (northern section). Creation of a *town square* in the wider (lower) pedestrian section of Castle Street to facilitate a vibrant café culture and event space. Consideration should be made for connectivity between the new Brightwells Centre and the historic town centre.
- All vehicles prohibited, except for permitted vehicles, and permits granted for private vehicle access.
- High quality paving with patterned delineation defining a single width vehicle track and wider pedestrian space, and landscaping features.
- Daytime deliveries only by special light vans operating from a delivery consolidation centre. Commercial delivery vehicles allowed access off peak.
- New access road to be constructed on acquired land between Castle Hill and West Street to provide vehicular access from North Farnham to the town centre and Upper Hart car park.

- All existing car parks be retained as the pedestrian zone would eliminate through traffic and 'in/out' vehicles that stop in the car parks could be accommodated without clogging access roads. To review car parking in some years if modes of private transport change.
- Connected cycle ways to be provided and bus services and routes reviewed as part of the pedestrian zone creation. Shuttle buses operating at high frequency to encourage passenger usage.

Neighbourhoods

Farnham neighbourhoods value their individual character features and want them at least protected by, if not enhanced equally by, the OIP. FTC recommends:

- Fundamental review of the bus service, including modernisation, routes (particularly commuter and school routes), service levels and fare structures to configure a more effective service that can still be financially viable. Establishment of public transport hubs, where practical, such as at the station.
- Park and ride facilities for visitors to the town and commuters who have already travelled some way to reach the town. Residents that still need to come by car would be best able to continue their journey to a town centre car park.
- To implement all practical mitigation measures that can be designed for North West Farnham at the enabling stages of the plans for the town centre. The neighbourhood be transformed into a 'village space' with appropriate street scene and highway interventions that encourage and enforce severe traffic calming and create a safer and improved pedestrian experience.
- Wrecclesham is also transformed into a 'village space' with appropriate street scene and highway interventions. This is necessitated by the traffic growth already incurred and likely to increase, due to housing developments both in and around Farnham.
- A redesign of the area around the station area to open up possibilities for creating a transport hub, a safer road environment and workable active travel route to the town centre.
- To expand many of the measures proposed for the town centre to be expanded to the North East Farnham neighbourhoods (Weybourne and Badshot Lea).

Major Road Network

FTC considers the range of potential options presented and the depth of justification for what is currently implied do not yet appear to have incorporated responses to various concepts that have been put forward by local people, and aspirations of the Vision Statement are being potentially reduced. Evaluation of Strategic Roads should relate to the benefits of the wider area that appear to be beyond the scope of the terms of reference of the current project. Neighbouring authorities are concentrating development with access to the A325 and A31.

FTC recommends:

- Greater clarity on town centre solutions to identify options for Hickley's Corner. Connectivity at South Street and Firgrove Hill depends on the level of traffic curtailment in the town centre.
- A proper interchange.
- An active travel route between Red Lion Lane and Weydon Lane and a possible Firgrove Hill interchange to interconnect the A31 and A287 at the Firgrove Hill crossover, if it is technically viable. A roundabout solution at Hickley's should also be considered.
- No highway intervention into the Shepherd and Flock conservation area.
- A progressive solution to the level crossing problems as a high priority.
- A western strategic link/bypass to remove traffic from the A3016 and a Wrecclesham bypass. Such routes would provide much needed relief for the current and predicted increases in traffic, whilst also helping further mitigation for the removal of routes through the town centre.