KEY ISSUE:

The Secretary of State for Transport published proposals for the A3 Hindhead Tunnel Scheme on the 24th October 2003. These proposals are contained within five draft orders under the Highways Act 1980. The draft Orders are open for comment and objection until the 9th of January 2004. The completion of the A3 scheme will affect the County Council’s local road and rights of way network in the following areas.

- Woolmer Hill and Critchmere Hill Area: - There is a predicted increase in traffic in this area due to the provision of the tunnel and it is proposed that this is be prevented by the provision of an area wide traffic calming scheme.
- Boundless Road: - The provision of an all movements junction at the northern end of the tunnel linking into Boundless Road will increase the volume of traffic using Boundless Road and Park Lane.
- The existing A3 Southwest of Hindhead crossroads: - This section of road will be de-trunked and will become the responsibility of the County Council.
- The Existing A3 East of Hindhead crossroads: - This section of the A3 will be closed and restored to heath land between the entrance to the National Trust café and the access to the youth hostel. The remaining sections of the old A3 are then downgraded to a Byway or Bridleway/Cycleway.
• Byways Open to All Traffic (BOAT) Network: - To provide for non motorised users it is proposed that the section of BOAT 500 is downgraded to a Bridleway/Cycleway between the National Trust café and the access to the youth Hostel
• Hazel Grove: - It is proposed that Hazel grove is closed to prevent rat running traffic
• Headley Road between the County Boundary and the existing A3: - This section of road may be subject to increased traffic volumes and it may be necessary to install traffic calming to address this problem.

**SUMMARY:**

As members will be aware the Highways Agency proposes to build a dual – two-lane carriageway running through a twin bore tunnel beneath the Devils Punch Bowl. This will link the existing A3 dual carriageways to the north and south of Hindhead and reduce congestion and significantly improve road safety and the environment around the Hindhead area. Details of this scheme are shown on the A3 Hindhead News (issue 6) and the explanation of the scheme and non-technical summary of the environmental statement leaflets attached to this report.

The consultation period for this scheme closes on the 9th January 2004 and it is proposed that this report together with members’ comments should form the basis of the County Council’s response to this consultation.

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That the Local Committee in Waverley should:

(I) Support the implementation of the Hindhead Tunnel Scheme.
(II) Ask the Local Transportation Director to consult on the schemes to be implemented on the Local Road Network.
(III) Support the closure and restoration to heath land of the old A3 as detailed in this report.
(IV) Support the downgrading of BOAT 500 to a Bridleway/cycleway as detailed in this report.
(V) Support the closure of Hazel Grove.
(VI) Support the proposals for the old A3 Southwest of Hindhead Crossroads.
(VII) Object to the proposals as published for the Boundless Road junction
(VIII) Ask that measures are implemented to protect the local road network before the Tunnel opens to traffic.

**LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER:** Philip Crossland
**TELEPHONE NUMBER:** 01483 517420
**E-MAIL ADDRESS:** philip.crossland@surreycc.gov.uk
**BACKGROUND PAPERS:** None
INTRODUCTION

Members will recall that this committee considered the Highways Agency proposals for the A3 Hindhead tunnel at the meeting of this committee on the 6th September 2002 and resolved to:

(I) approve the principle of traffic calming for Woolmer Hill Road and agree that this should be implemented before the Tunnel is open to traffic.

(II) consider allocating funding for the development, design and construction of a Traffic Calming Scheme for Woolmer Hill Road from a future year’s LTP programme.

(III) agree the principle that Boundless Lane should not be accessed from the A3.

(IV) agree that the existing A3 around the Devils Punch Bowl should be closed to motor vehicle traffic (except for access reasons) and restored to provide pedestrian/pedal cycle and equestrian facilities. [Carried by eleven votes to three.]

(V) agree that the Local Transportation Manager should represent the Local Committee at discussions with the Highways Agency.

(VI) agree that the Chairman and Local Transportation Manager should make representations to the Government Office for the South East to ask them to consider alternative funding arrangements for the Woolmer Hill Road Traffic Calming Scheme.

Since that meeting the scheme has progressed and officers have been in regular discussions with the Highways Agency regarding the affects of their proposals on the local road network.

The Highways Agency have now published the draft orders for the scheme and the County Council have until the 9th January 2004 to formally comment on these orders.

WOOLMER HILL AND CRITCHMERE HILL AREA

Traffic modelling work undertaken by the Highways Agency’s consultants showed that this area would suffer from significant ‘rat running’ problems once the tunnel scheme was completed if no action was taken to prevent this. As a result the County Council has been working closely with the Highways Agency’s consultants to develop options for a traffic calming scheme in this area. It is hoped that local consultation on these proposals can take place early next year. These proposals will include safer crossing facilities to Woolmer Hill School and will also include the junction of Critchmere Hill and the A287, which has a poor accident history.
BOUNDLESS ROAD AND PARK LANE

At the time of the previous Local Committee report concerns had been expressed about the potential for increased traffic on Boundless Road and members agreed the principle that Boundless Road should not be accessed from the A3. Following this, discussions with the Highways Agency showed that the traffic model was not predicting an increase in traffic in this area. However, subsequent changes to the scheme in this area have meant that traffic is now predicted to significantly increase in this area. This is an unacceptable situation as the roads in this area are unsuitable for additional traffic and this situation would lead to community concerns and leave the County Council with an ongoing maintenance liability. Discussions are currently ongoing with the Highways Agency to find a solution to this problem. However, there does not appear to be a consensus in the community for any one course of action and, to move this issue forward, a meeting has been organised between the County Council, the Highways Agency and the Parish Council. However, it is clear that the proposals as published for this area of the scheme cannot be supported.

EXISTING A3 SOUTHWEST OF HINDHEAD CROSSROADS

This section of the A3 will be de-trunked and become the responsibility of the County Council. A roundabout will be introduced at the junction with Headley Road to improve safety and access into and out of Headley Road. The County Council is also discussing with the Highways Agency the possibility of including cycling facilities on this section and we are also working closely with Waverley Borough Council and other partners to support the regeneration of the centre of Hindhead.

EXISTING A3 EAST OF HINDHEAD CROSSROADS

It is proposed that this section of the A3 will be closed, buried and restored to heath land between the entrance to the National Trust café and the access to the youth hostel. The remaining sections of the old A3 are then downgraded to a Byway or Bridleway/Cycleway. Members may be aware of the STOAT campaign to retain the existing A3 for local traffic. The National Trust, English Nature and the AONB are supportive of the proposals to close the A3 and restore the area to heath land. This is one of the main requirements of the National Trust in supporting the scheme and not objecting to the compulsory purchase of its inalienable land. Whilst there may be some benefit to sections of the community from retaining the old A3 this would clearly mean that the opportunity for significant environmental improvements would be lost. This would mean that the would be no environmental mitigation for the damage caused by constructing the tunnel and this would be likely to bring into question the viability of the scheme. Proposals of this nature will always have both positive and negative impacts and it is considered that the Highways Agency’s proposals are the best compromise to achieve maximum benefits for the community as a whole both in traffic and environmental terms.
BYWAYS OPEN TO ALL TRAFFIC (BOAT) NETWORK

To provide for non motorised users it is proposed that the section of BOAT 500 is downgraded to a Bridleway/Cycleway between the National Trust café and the access to the youth Hostel. This will make it possible to prevent access to this route by motorised vehicles and provide a 2.5 metre wide shared route for cyclists and pedestrians and a parallel route for equestrians. The Waverley Cycle Forum does not favour this solution, they feel that the gradients are too steep and cyclists will be in conflict with both each other and pedestrians. They would prefer to use the existing A3 as a cycle route for road cycles. It is accepted that the proposed route is not as high a standard as could be achieved by retaining part of the old A3. However schemes of this nature have to be the best compromise for all and clearly the environmental benefits and the National Trust wish to restore and improve the environment in this area have to be considered alongside the views of the Cyclists Forum. It is considered that the Highways Agency’s proposals for non-motorised road users are a balanced compromise between utility issues and the environmental issues.

HAZEL GROVE

This route would become a significant ‘rat run’ for traffic accessing the A3 if the route were to remain open. For this reason it is proposed to close Hazel Grove at its junction with Glenlea and High Pitfold. This will prevent any problems of ‘rat running’ but would mean that residential and Grove and Amesbury schools access would be via the new Hazel Grove/Portsmouth Rd/A3 junction and not via Nutcombe Lane. Recently there has been some local concern over these proposals and the effects it may have on residents. However, it is considered that the Highways Agency’s proposal is the best solution at this location, although discussions are continuing between the County Council, Highways Agency and local residents’ to examine alternative proposals.

HEADLEY ROAD BETWEEN THE COUNTY BOUNDARY AND THE EXISTING A3

This section of road may be subject to increased traffic volumes and it may be necessary to install traffic calming to address this problem. Some residents have already expressed their concerns to the County Council over increased volumes of traffic. Discussions will take place with the Highways Agency and Hampshire County Council to identify what would be appropriate on this section as measure on this part of Headley Road will have a knock on effect on Crossways Drive which is in Hampshire

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Currently there are no works programmed in the County Councils 3 year LTP rolling programme for traffic schemes. The County Council has been told by the
Highways Agency that there is money available for these schemes as part of the LTP process and the County would have to bid for additional funding. The Local Transportation Director and the LTP Group Manager will be meeting with the Government Office to progress this on the 19th December.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

This project will provide much needed relief for the Hindhead area and will dramatically improve the traffic flow on the A3. The Highways Agency has approached this project in collaboration with all key stakeholders and is consulting widely with those affected. As with any project of this magnitude there is likely to be a large number of issues to be resolved and it is likely that the final scheme will be the best compromise for all users and stakeholders to achieve maximum benefits for the community as a whole. The improved traffic flow on the A3 should reduce overall traffic levels on the county road network as levels of rat running traffic will be reduced by the removal of the Hindhead crossroads bottleneck.