



LOCAL COMMITTEE (WAVERLEY)

**MEMBER QUESTIONS AND
RESPONSES**

21 MARCH 2014

1. From Mr Robert Knowles

The Hindhead tunnel has closed 34 times since it opened resulting in heavy traffic on side roads and in towns and villages around the tunnel. What steps are being taken to improve signage close to the tunnel and on roads used by traffic that turns off the A3 onto local roads, especially around Haslemere ?

Response

Surrey County Council Highway Engineers and Surrey Police Road Safety Officers have been working with representatives of the Highways Agency (HA) to assess the current diversion signs for planned (maintenance) and unplanned (accidents) closures of the Hindhead tunnel. A review of the signage was recently completed and a number of suggested permanent improvements have been submitted to the HA for consideration. With immediate effect the HA has agreed to trial the use of portable vehicle information signs at key diversion locations to alert drivers to closures at the earliest opportunity. The HA is hoping to secure funding in the next financial year to install the remaining suggested improvements.

2. From Mr David Munro

The M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has published a draft 'Enterprise M3 (EM3) Strategic Economic Plan'. It is subject to consultation ending on 31 March 2014.

Many organisations are cited as having contributed to the draft plan, including Surrey County Council and Waverley Borough Council although, as a member of both councils, I do not remember having been asked to give any input – but I will be doing so anyway before the end of the month ! I am disappointed that Waverley Local Committee does not seem to have been consulted – is that correct?

I understand that funds channelled through the M3 LEP in accordance with the priorities and aspirations in the Economic Plan will be the main source of funding for road projects in the next few years. In other words, if it's not in the plan, it won't get built. Is that correct ?

Funding of some £300-400 million is being sought for a six-year economic programme starting in 2015. Of this, some £150-200 million has been provisionally earmarked for transport schemes, the majority for 'growth towns' (Basingstoke, Farnborough, Guildford and Woking) and 'step-up towns' (Aldershot, Camberley, Bordon/Whitehill and Staines). However, there is also mention of creating a 'pinch-point' fund although I cannot find any reference to how much this might consist of nor how it could be allocated.

I am concerned that the four substantial road schemes hitherto proposed for Farnham to relieve significant congestion and other handicaps to the amenities of the town and surrounding villages will be overlooked. These schemes are, as listed in Annex 4 to the plan, are:

- A31 Hickley's Corner Junction Improvements (I guess the medium term at-grade project)
- Hickley's Corner Underpass (the big one).
- Relieve Traffic Congestion in Farnham Town Centre
- Wrecclesham Relief Road

It is reassuring to see that all four are listed as schemes that are still worthy of promotion, but the fact that the prime criteria as to priority now seem to be economic (as opposed to relieving community separation, air quality, traffic congestion, quality of life, etc.) surely disadvantages all four as against other projects in growth and step-up towns.

Whitehill/Bordon has long been recognised as an area for redevelopment once the Ministry Of Defence moves out in 2015. While the plan goes into some detail about the improvements within the town itself, including a local relief road, it is vague as to the improvements to the wider network. In particular, there is no specific mention that I can find on funding for junction improvements on the Wrecclesham stretch of the A325 or the Farnham bypass.

In summary, I am concerned that the adoption of this plan as drafted will significantly set back the urgent improvements to roads in the Farnham area that are required.

Questions:

1. Are the statements and assertions above broadly correct ?
2. Is anything significantly missing ?
3. What can Surrey County Council, this Committee and individual members do to influence the plan so that it more accurately reflects the aspirations of the Farnham community ?
4. Longer-term, can assurances be given that this Committee will be involved in the plan as it develops and, if so, how can this be achieved ?
5. Specifically, how can this Committee influence the development of Whitehill/Bordon so that the wider community, particularly in Wrecclesham, can be compensated for the projected increase in traffic that will ensue ?

Response

1. *Are the statements and assertions above broadly correct ?*
2. *Anything significantly missing ?*
3. *What can Surrey County Council, this committee and individual members do to influence the plan so that it more accurately reflects the aspirations of the Farnham community ?*

Not all of the statements and assertions are correct. Below is the current position which includes any missing information and how Members can influence the plans.

The Department for Transport have indicated that all of their capital funding for Transport has been allocated to LEPs for the period 2015-2021. The EM3 LEP is bidding overall for up to £350M of which between £180 and £250M could be allocated to transport projects. No money is available for local transport improvement schemes outside this allocation over the period 2015-2021.

National schemes for the Highways Agency and Rail Networks continue to be funded separately over the above period. It is broadly correct to say that if schemes have not been included in the plan then they will not secure funding. However, it is likely that there will be exceptions to cater for transport schemes promoted by either the private or public sector that have not been included at this stage but nevertheless have a compelling economic case measured by new jobs created and housing delivered.

Whilst the four Waverley major schemes have been included in submissions to the LEP they do not fall within the priority towns that have been identified as part of the main growth story set out by the EM3 LEP. The key growth and step up towns, which are backed up by the evidence include Guildford, Woking, Camberley and Staines. The LEP process is very competitive and the EM3 area has to prioritise areas which will deliver the largest amount jobs, housing, commercial floor space and Gross Value Added (GVA) in order to win a decent share of the national funding available. Feedback from Government to the EM3 LEP on the basis of the draft Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) submitted and on-going growth conversations have indicated that they have pitched this correctly. There are discussions with the EM3 LEP supported by both Surrey and Hampshire County Councils to create a smaller fund to cater for towns outside the priority areas. This fund if agreed will be scalable based on the overall amount secured later this year. If agreed the two smaller schemes in Waverley would stand a good chance of being funded via this route subject to their business case. The two larger schemes in Waverley are substantial undertakings for the County Council as promoter and realistically cannot be delivered within the proposed SEP funding period 2015-2021. These schemes remain part of the County Council's long term aspirations as they are part of the current major schemes programme approved by the Cabinet on 27 November 2012. However, both schemes would need show a significant economic impact over and above the transport and environmental improvements that they would deliver to succeed in the current SEP process. It would be helpful if the Local Committee and individual members supported the creation of the fund for towns outside the priority areas, accepting that this would be a smaller allocation than that likely to be set aside for the key growth and step up towns. This would address the issue of the two smaller Farnham schemes being overlooked.

4. *Longer-term, can assurances be given that this Committee will be involved in the plan as it develops and, if so, how can this be achieved ?*

The development of the SEP has been a very fast moving process which will have started and finished in less than six months. This has posed significant issues in relation to the level of engagement that could realistically be expected to meet this challenging timetable. I would urge you to compare this with the development of the Local Transport Plan which is of a similar scale but was carried out over a two and half year period allowing for a different level of engagement. Notwithstanding these pressures the transport schemes that have gone into the SEP have been synthesised from the emerging Local Plans into the Local Borough/District Transport Strategies that have been up to now informally discussed with Local Committees. In preparing the SEP some packaging of schemes in the Local Plans has been necessary. The Transport Strategies will come before the Local Committee for sign off later this year allowing full involvement in what is likely to go forward in the longer term. I hope this gives you and the Local Committee the assurances that you seek in shaping what happens locally. At a county level the SEP is being signed off by a Leaders Board made up of all of the Counties, Boroughs and Districts in the EM3 area.

5. *Specifically, how can this committee influence the development of Whitehill/Bordon so that the wider community, particularly in Wrecclesham, can be compensated for the projected increase in traffic that will ensue ?*

Surrey County Council was involved in earlier discussions with Hampshire County Council and East Hampshire District Council when a considerably larger "Eco Town" of 5,300 homes was being looked at. At that time it was demonstrated that the traffic impact arising from the residual movements that were left on the wider network, once all the sustainable transport measures had been implemented and delivered benefits, was not severe. The impacts mainly related to severance issues on the A31/A325 through the community of Wrecclesham, and it will be recalled that it was agreed that we would seek a package of low key measures that would assist in reducing the impact of the A325 through Wrecclesham, and to assist pedestrian movements across the A31 from the southern suburbs of Farnham to the old town. It is likely that the impact associated with the more recent proposals of some 4,000 houses (a reduction of 1,300) will be less. It is therefore unlikely that a case could be made for anything major in western Waverley. That said, the County will still push for the improvements so far negotiated, which will certainly help the community of Wrecclesham.

3. From Mr Bryn Morgan

The development at Hollowdene, in Frensham, was accompanied by a section 106 agreement to provide community facilities for the village. This was something of a groundbreaking initiative with the major part of the monies from the infrastructure levy raised being allocated to the provision of a new village shop and a parish meeting room. The developer has fully complied with his obligations in this respect in a very satisfactory manner and in good time

However, a part of the monies raised was specified for improvement to parking facilities at Hollowdene and Surrey County Council was allocated funds from the

section 106 monies to carry out that work. I understand that the work has not been completed by the County Council's highways contractors on the grounds that part of the area concerned is in Parish Council ownership and, because it is not part of the highway the County Council cannot themselves carry out the work, even as the agent of the Parish Council.

My question, therefore, to the Local Committee, is to ask that the County Council decide either to:

- (a) carry out the works required by, and funded from, the section 106 agreement without further delay, or
- b) return to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) that part of the section 106 monies already paid or forego any part of the section 106 monies remaining in respect of the works required for the car park to enable another contractor to be engaged to properly satisfy the terms of the agreement made between the developer, the Parish Council and the LPA

I further understand that the parish clerk has not received a reply to the letter sent to the County Council, outlining the full details, on behalf of the Vice-Chairman, dated 23 May 2013, and would appreciate an update on the progress in dealing with the issues raised. May I be assured that she will receive a reply in the near future ?

Response

The highways element of the S106 agreement does not require improving parking facilities at Hollowdene, but Surrey County Council (SCC) Highways have agreed some measures with the Parish Council (PC), which have been installed. The PC does not want any further alterations on the highway, such as signing or road markings, and SCC has agreed that if the developer is agreeable the outstanding highway element will be transferred to the PC, given also the consent of the LPA to the same. It is understood that the PC was going to obtain the written agreement of the developer to enable this arrangement.

4. From Mr Steve Cosser

Frith Hill Road in Godalming has now been closed for about five weeks following a land slip. Local residents are understandably concerned about the apparent lack of action to get the road reopened. I understand that senior highways staff met on site yesterday to discuss possible actions. Can I please be reassured that as a result of this meeting urgent action will now be taken to enable the road to be fully reopened ?

Response

This major land slip, as a result of extreme rain and wind, occurred in early February, bringing a large tree and a lot of soil material down from a steep escarpment rising above Frith Hill and blocking the road, which remains closed to through traffic. The area was barriered off with only the footway on the opposite side of the road remaining open for pedestrians. Surrey County Council (SCC) Highways commissioned WS Atkins to investigate and their report was received 8 March. It concluded that the site continues to pose a risk of failure and in order to investigate further the debris in the road need to be removed in a controlled

manner to expose the lower part of the slip face, and trees at the top need to be reduced or removed. Subject to a further inspection of the cleared slope, a single lane on the footway side could be opened for traffic. These works are now being organised, and design options for single lane working (traffic lights, priority give way, possibly no-entry/one way) are with the SCC design team.

In the longer term Atkins recommended that a remedial solution be implemented, eliminating as far as possible risk to road users and third parties which could comprise re-grading the slope to a safe angle, soil nailing, rock fencing and face netting.

Further assessment is required before a long term solution can be identified and, whatever this may be, it is likely to be expensive. The Frith Hill slip has been listed in the bid for storm damage that SCC recently submitted to central government. Highways has an annual budget for embankment planned maintenance, approximately £0.3m in 2013/14; however, budget was used on embankment emergencies from Bridge Strengthening, making a total budget of £1.5m. Frith Hill will now be prioritised against other instances of embankment failure for potential inclusion in the 2014/15 programme.

If it is safe to re-open the road to a single lane of traffic, it is likely to be some considerable time before works can be undertaken that will allow reinstating two-way traffic.