

## **Farnham Infrastructure Programme**

### **Farnham Board Meeting**

**DATE:** 22 JANUARY 2021

**DOC NO:** 4D476001-SCC-PRG-PAP-000012 REV 1.0

**REPORT OF:** MR TIM OLIVER – BOARD CHAIR

**LEAD OFFICER:** CHRIS TUNSTALL

**SUBJECT:** OPTIMISED INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

#### **SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

To note the outcome and recommendations of the draft Optimised Infrastructure Plan (OIP) (Annex A) and agree the next steps for public consultation on the OIP.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that the Board:

1. Note the outcome and recommendations of the Draft Optimised Infrastructure Plan (OIP), as detailed in Annex A; and
2. Agree to undertake public consultation on the Draft OIP, to gain feedback from the public to inform further development of the OIP; and
3. Agree to further study work to further develop key components of the OIP.

#### **REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Optimised Infrastructure Plan (OIP) has been developed during the last three months as a key component of a planned process for infrastructure planning in Farnham.

The OIP is designed to provide an integrated approach to the infrastructure challenges facing Farnham. It provides a framework for the development of future infrastructure proposals for the town, including the four projects identified in the Vision Statement (Quick Wins, Town Centre, A31 Hickley's Corner and A325 Wrecclesham). It looks beyond these projects to provide a comprehensive programme to address the challenges facing the town.

It has been developed in response to the Farnham Vision Statement, which was discussed with the Board at the 20 November meeting. It has also taken account of a wide range of national, regional and local policies and strategies, previous studies that have been undertaken in Farnham and analysis of recent data and issues raised at the Local Liaison Forums (LLF's).

The Draft OIP sets out the policy context, current and future challenges for the town, a long list of potential interventions and the process for strategic assessment and packaging of the interventions.

This is a key step in the process of developing the infrastructure programme for Farnham. Further work will now be needed to develop the detailed evidence, indicative scheme designs, costings, technical reporting and business cases required to attract funding.

## **DETAILS:**

### **Background**

1. It was previously agreed by the Board that an Optimised Infrastructure Plan (OIP) should be developed for Farnham. This would build on the Vision Statement and set out a detailed programme of interventions for the town.
2. Atkins were appointed in October 2020 to prepare the OIP. The OIP is based on a staged, evidence-led approach:
  - Analysis of evidence, including previous studies, policies and strategies and data on travel demands;
  - Problem statement: identification of current and future problems and issues;
  - Objective setting: based on existing policies and strategies and responding to the problems and issues;
  - Options identification: identification of a wide range of potential interventions to tackle the problems and issues;
  - Options assessment: application of an appraisal framework to objectively assess the interventions and inform the identification of priorities; and
  - OIP development (drawing together all of the above): packaging of schemes, programme development and identification of next steps.
3. These steps have been completed, with comprehensive analysis of the issues and a robust basis for the development of a coherent strategy for the town. This will ensure that there is a planned approach to the future infrastructure programme.

### **Findings**

4. The policy context for major infrastructure is rapidly changing. The increased focus on tackling the climate emergency will have major implications for infrastructure planning, both in terms of facilitating a major behavioural shift towards more sustainable ways of living, and in improving the sustainability performance of new infrastructure. This is reflected in the Paris Agreement, the UK Climate Change Act, DfT's planning for decarbonisation of the transport system and Surrey's own Climate Change Strategy.
5. There are other important policies to be considered, including the National Industrial Strategy, TfSE's Transport Strategy for the South East, Surrey's 2050 Place Strategy, 2030 Economic Strategy, Waverley's Local Plan and the Farnham Neighbourhood

Plan. The new Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) will also play a critical role for the future transport system in Surrey: the OIP is designed to be fully consistent with the LTP4.

6. The OIP discusses in detail the most important strategy documents and sets out the four LTP4 objectives as the starting point for the strategic framework for the LTP4. The four LTP4 objectives are also fully consistent with the strategic principles that were developed in the Farnham Vision document.
7. The OIP presents the evidence on the current and future challenges in Farnham. It highlights the high quality natural and built environment in and around the town, but demonstrates the problems caused by traffic. The root cause of these problems is the high level of car ownership and dependency in the town. Car ownership is much higher than the national average, and there are very high levels of car use for many journeys, including travel to work (noting that data is based on the situation before the Covid-19 pandemic).
8. There are also challenges with HGVs and LGVs. Farnham has significantly higher volumes of LGVs (compared to total traffic) than other towns in Surrey: this is likely to be due to the needs of retailers and high levels of consumer demand. However, the fundamental challenges in the town are primarily caused by high levels of car use.
9. The countywide traffic model has also been used to forecast the future situation. Total traffic on the network (expressed as vehicle kilometres) is forecast to increase by 40% from 2020 to 2050. This will cause a significant increase in congestion, worsened air quality and a further deterioration of the quality of place in the town. It will also make it extremely difficult for Waverley and Surrey to meet decarbonisation objectives, even with the planned acceleration of the ban of fossil-fuelled cars to 2030. Technology alone, i.e. the adoption of a fully electric vehicle fleet, will not deliver the scale of change needed to address the climate emergency.
10. The OIP draws together existing policies and evidence to develop specific objectives for the OIP. These are:
  - Rapidly reduce carbon emissions, ensuring that Waverley and Farnham are on track for net zero by 2050;
  - Well-connected communities across Farnham and the wider Strategic Opportunity Area;
  - Supporting the economic vitality of Farnham and enable sustainable growth across the wider Strategic Opportunity Area; and
  - Improving the quality of place in Farnham, with clean air, healthy lifestyles and less dominance of traffic on communities.
11. These high-level objectives are underpinned by a comprehensive set of supporting indicators and reflect the importance of reducing the dependence on car travel and improving the attractiveness of walking, cycling and public transport. Volumes of goods traffic also need to be reduced and better managed. These will be critical to the success of the strategy.
12. A comprehensive list of potential options has been identified to address the challenges and support the objectives. These options were identified through review of existing documents, optioneering by the project team and through feedback from

the Vision consultation and recent LLF sessions. Options were identified under the following categories:

- Travel behaviour change programmes (e.g. travel planning);
- Demand management options;
- Improved public realm in the town centre;
- Improvements to walking routes;
- Improvements to cycling infrastructure;
- Measures such as e-bikes and e-scooters;
- Public transport improvements;
- Shift to zero emission transport (electric buses, taxis, charging infrastructure);
- Roadspace reallocation and safety measures;
- Freight schemes (e.g. Freight Consolidation Centres);
- Integrated road corridor improvements; and
- Major schemes (e.g. A31 Hickleys Corner, A325 Wrecclesham Bypass).

13. A sifting tool was developed to support the assessment of options, which comprised three steps:

- Step 1: Strategic Case, which assessed the extent to which each option would support the OIP objectives; and
- Step 2: Economic Case, which assessed the extent to which each option would be likely to be an effective use of public funds; and
- Step 3: Delivery Case, which assessed the deliverability and affordability of each option.

14. The OIP summarises the outcomes of the assessments. It highlights that many of the options meet the three criteria, but that further study work is needed to assess the strength of case for certain schemes:

- A31 corridor between Coxbridge Roundabout and Shepherd and Flock, including Hickleys Corner: more detailed review of the issues and development of options, focusing on tackling the problems at Hickleys Corner;
- Wrecclesham area: more detailed analysis of the issues and assessment of the potential of a bypass to help tackle these issues; and
- Western Bypass: initial assessment of the extent to which a Western Bypass could help divert traffic away from the town.

15. The final section of the OIP concludes by presenting the emerging strategy for Farnham. It sets out a series of components:

- Behaviour change;
- Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and Safer Streets;
- Town Centre Strategy;
- Walking;
- Cycling, e-bikes and e-scooters;
- Public transport;
- Parking and Demand Management;
- Electrification of the transport system;
- Freight and deliveries; and
- Better journeys by road.

16. Statements are also provided on the indicative proposals for the Town Centre, North Farnham, South Farnham and the A31 corridor. These include reference to Quick Wins measures, including HGV restrictions and speed management, where appropriate.
17. A suggested implementation programme is also provided, categorising schemes by short-term (1-3 years, 2021-2024), medium term (4-8 years, 2025-2029) and long term (<8 years, 2030 and beyond). It is expected that a number of Quick Wins measures could be delivered during 2021-22.
18. An overview is provided of the approach to realising the benefits from the investment programme, including further work to develop performance management metrics to track progress in achieving the planned outcomes. This will include progress in decarbonisation, improving quality of place, supporting the future economy and improving accessibility for all.
19. The final section concludes with the proposed next steps in the process. Public consultation is planned on the OIP in February / March (see Consultation section below). At the same time, further development of key components will take place, including an immediate priority to develop options for the A31 at Hickleys Corner. Technical work will also take place to review the issues at Wrecclesham and assess the scope for a Western Bypass.
20. The programme team will now scope in more detail the forward programme, with a further update to be provided to the next Board meeting in March.

<b>CONSULTATION:</b>
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21. The Draft OIP has been informed by the consultation on the Farnham Vision (which took place in October / November 2020) and the LLF's that have taken place during December and January. The inputs from stakeholders and the public have been vital in providing detailed intelligence on the issues, challenges and priorities for local communities. These issues are reflected in the Draft OIP.
22. It is now proposed that the next iteration of consultation should take place on the findings and recommendations of the Draft OIP. The OIP contains a wide range of ambitious proposals, and the planned consultation will be important to:
  - Ensure a common understanding of the key challenges, opportunities and options for improving infrastructure in the town;
  - Communicate the critical issues that must be addressed in the programme, including behaviour change in how people will travel in the future; and
  - Provide evidence of public support for schemes, to provide a sound foundation for the development of projects and reduce the risks of opposition at a later date.
23. It is proposed that consultation would commence in the week commencing 15<sup>th</sup> February, with four clear weeks before the current planned start of the pre-election period. If the elections are delayed to later in the year, the opportunity could be taken to further extend the consultation period. A report will be produced with a view to reporting the findings to the May meeting of the Farnham Board.

24. The consultation will include web pages describing the draft OIP proposals, a 'virtual exhibition' and a programme of online discussions and LLF's.

**RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:**

25. The Board has no Executive Powers. Any decisions made would require Surrey County Council to follow its own legal advice and its approval procedures.

**FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS**

26. The costs to date for developing the OIP have been met by Surrey County Council (SCC) and the budgets for the next phases of work will be identified within subsequent SCC Reports.

**SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTARY**

27. As proposals are developed that require necessary Surrey County Council approval, individual S151 approvals will be sought.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS – MONITORING OFFICER**

28. The Board has no Executive Powers. Any decisions made would require Surrey County Council to follow its own legal advice and its approval procedures.

**EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY**

29. As part of Surrey County Council reporting requirements individual Equality Impact Assessments EIAs will be undertaken.

**OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

30. There are no other implications in respect of this Report.

**WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

31. Consultation on the Draft OIP is proposed to commence in February and further development of the key components of the programme is proposed to take place between February and April. Feedback from the consultation will also be used to review and refine the programme.

**Contact Officer:**

Chris Tunstall

Farnham Programme Director

[Chris.tunstall@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:Chris.tunstall@surreycc.gov.uk)

07866008912

**Annex A – Outcome and Recommendations of the draft Optimised Infrastructure Plan**

**Sources/ background papers – Farnham Board Reports**

**Annex A - Outcome and Recommendations of the draft Optimised Infrastructure Plan**

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