

Farnham Infrastructure Programme

Farnham Board Meeting

AGENDA ITEM 09

DATE: 17 JUNE 2022

REPORT OF: TIM OLIVER – BOARD CHAIR

LEAD OFFICER: ELAINE MARTIN – PROGRAMME MANAGER

SUBJECT: UPPER HART LINK ROAD

SUMMARY OF ISSUE:

As part of stakeholder engagement on Farnham Town Centre, suggestions have been made to consider a route from Castle Street to the Upper Hart car park, as a possible solution for vehicular traffic travelling north/south through Farnham if Castle Street was to be pedestrianised.

DETAILS:

1. On the basis of stakeholder feedback, the Programme Team have considered two possible options for an 'Upper Hart Link Road' within the Town Centre:
 - Option 1 (shown in yellow in the plan below) would connect Castle Hill to the Upper Hart car park only
 - Option 2 (shown in red in the plan below) would be in conjunction with Option 1 and would connect Castle Hill to the Upper Hart Car Park and to the A325 West Street, providing a through route north/south across the Town Centre.
2. Figure 1 shows an aerial plan of the area with the two routes.

Figure 1 Proposed Route options



Benefits of the Upper Hart Link

3. It is acknowledged that if Castle Street was to become pedestrianised, thus being closed to through vehicular traffic, then Option 2 would provide an alternative north/south link through Farnham Town Centre. The Link Road would also be providing access to the Upper Hart Car Park (and Lower Hart Car Park and Waitrose) from the north of Farnham.
4. If an Upper Hart Link Road was provided, this may support the transition to the pedestrianisation of Castle Street in the future by retaining vehicular access across Farnham Town Centre from the north/south.

Optimised Infrastructure Plan (OIP) Objectives

5. The OIP identified that the root cause of the challenges in Farnham is the very high car dependency that currently exists, this with a large forecast growth in vehicle kilometres by passenger vehicles and freight.
6. One of the primary objectives of the OIP objective is to 'rapidly reduce carbon emissions, ensuring that Farnham and Waverley are on track for net zero by 2050'.

7. Therefore, the dependency on vehicular travel needs to reduce across Farnham, to reduce congestion and improve the air quality of public spaces in the Town Centre, and to support the road to net zero carbon ambition. This in turn will support the people of Farnham to lead healthier lifestyles and reduce the dominance of traffic in its communities.
8. There are currently poor walking and cycling facilities, and public transport links, across the Farnham Town Centre. The OIP set out an ambition to create well connected communities across Farnham. The OIP supports creating solutions that make walking, cycling and public transport the most natural choice for all shorter journeys, or as part of a longer journey, which is in line with the UK Government target. The Avoid-Shift-Improve Framework (detailed in the OIP) sets out to increase the use of 'efficient', well used modes of travel, and to deter the use of inefficient modes. This suggests that any emerging design and Programme resource should instead be focused on maximising sustainable travel options for Farnham's residents.

Disbenefits of the Upper Hart Link

9. The proposed route is in close proximity and impacts on residential properties, University for the Creative Arts, Strugar Centre – medical centre, Potters Gate CE Primary School and Waitrose. Construction of a new road in this location would introduce safety concerns for pedestrians accessing these facilities along with severance, reduced safety for vulnerable road users.
10. The re-distribution of traffic in the local area will have an impact on higher noise levels on the local area. During both construction and on opening of the route would result in an increase in noise levels. However it is noted that the transfer of this vehicular traffic would benefit residents in Castle Street.
11. Due to the increase in traffic, air quality would be reduced along this route. The re-distribution of traffic in the local area will have an impact on greenhouse gas emissions. However air quality levels would be transferred from Castle Street to this route, rather than reduced in the town centre overall.
12. There will be an impact on landscape and townscape as the route will introduce infrastructure to a currently a semi-rural environment which is through the conservation area. The route is adjacent to existing settlements which will give negative impacts to landscape resulting in permanent change in land use and loss of established vegetation, changes to existing views, and the loss of private green space and gardens. There will also be the impact of light pollution from vehicles at night into a previously unlit area to consider, including the introduction of street lighting along the new carriageway.
13. There will be an impact on the historic environment as there are a number of listed buildings in the vicinity of the route including Farnham Castle (scheduled monument). Its construction could have a detrimental impact on the site's archaeology and heritage as a result of traffic and lighting which should be protected.
14. There will be an impact on biodiversity, as the area of the route is characterised by a variety of managed and semi-natural habitats within the area and a potential for

protected and notable species that might be adversely affected either during the construction or the operation of the new infrastructure. There will also be a requirement for a net gain for biodiversity, in line with national planning policy which will require replacement of any biodiversity lost in the area of the footprint of the road of +10%.

15. Construction of the new link road would require use of the Upper Hart car park, therefore it would reduce the number of available parking spaces through either provision of the link road or landing of the access road. This will also require a need to maintain reasonable gradients (estimated 50-100 spaces). For Option 1 there will be a need to create a hard and /or soft landscaped barrier impermeable to vehicles to prevent vehicles accessing the rest of the town centre from the Upper Hart Car Park. This will mean the likely loss of further car park spaces, impacting on the lack of flexibility in utilising town centre car park capacity – since the Upper Hart Car Park will be for those only visiting Farnham from the north.
16. The route does not align with the Optimised Infrastructure Plan objectives.
17. New infrastructure for vehicular traffic does not align with local or national policy objectives to achieve carbon neutrality.
18. A new road will mean additional renewal and maintenance costs, which will fall under the remit of SCC. They will have to be fulfilled as part of the maintenance regime operated by the council.
19. There will be a major delay of delivering any related option for the town centre with the Upper Hart Link Road due to the planning and securing land either through private negotiation or compulsory purchase which can take approximately 2 years following detailed design and identification of extents of land pockets.
20. The current estimate of construction and land purchase is circa £8.1m, and there is no external funding available, as it is unlikely that central government funding would be secured for this route.

Aerial extract from Google Map of area

Northern entry point of Upper Hart Link



Southern entry point of Upper Hart Link



Conclusion & Recommendation

21. Based on the elements presented above it is recognised that whilst there are some benefits, the proposed Upper Hart link would have a significant negative impact on the local area. Option 2 introduces significant health and safety concerns and given the estimated cost it is difficult to justify Option 1 in economic terms. There is no external funding for this scheme, and it does not align with the OIP objectives.
22. It is recommended that the further work on the route be paused and that it is removed from any emerging designs and focused on maximising sustainable travel options for Farnham's residents.

CONSULTATION:

23. A public consultation for the Town Centre scheme will be carried out in Summer 2022.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

24. The Board has no statutory powers and as such any decisions requiring approval by the responsible authorities, in this case Surrey County Council, will have individual risk assessments.

FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

26. The construction and land purchase cost estimate is circa £8.1m and there is no external funding available for this scheme.

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. A Programme-level Equality Impact Assessment was carried out in August 2021. This was approved by the Programme Team at the September Programme Board and indicated that there are currently no substantive concerns associated with the Programme's proposals based upon the level of information available.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

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

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

31. Programme activity will continue in line with the decisions made by the Board.

Contact Officer:

Elaine Martin
Programme Manager
Elaine.Martin@surreycc.go.uk