

Farnham Infrastructure Programme



Upper Hart Link Road

High Level Feasibility Report

December 2022



Farnham Infrastructure Programme

Farnham Board Meeting

Item 4.2

DATE: 16 DECEMBER 2022

REPORT OF: TIM OLIVER – BOARD CHAIRMAN

LEAD OFFICER: ELAINE MARTIN – PROGRAMME
MANAGER

SUBJECT: UPPER HART LINK ROAD

Background

1. As part of stakeholder engagement for the Farnham Town Centre project, suggestions have been made to consider a new route for vehicles travelling north-south from Castle Hill to the Upper Hart car park, particularly if Castle Street and other streets in the town centre were pedestrianised.
2. A public consultation for the Town Centre scheme was carried out in Summer 2022, the Upper Hart Link Road was not presented as an option.
3. On the basis of stakeholder feedback, the Programme Team have considered two possible options for an 'Upper Hart Link Road' within the town centre, Figure 1 shows an aerial plan of the area with the two routes:
 - Option 1 (shown in yellow in Figure 1) connects Castle Hill to the Upper Hart car park only – this would not provide a through route for vehicles.
 - Option 2 (shown in red in Figure 1) in conjunction with Option 1 and would connect Castle Hill to the Upper Hart Car Park and to the A325 West Street via Long Garden Way and The Hart, providing a through route for vehicles travelling north-south across the town centre.

Figure 1 Proposed Route Options



Optimised Infrastructure Plan (OIP) Objectives

4. The OIP identified that the one of the root causes of the challenges in Farnham is the very high car dependency that currently exists, which could be exacerbated by a large forecast growth in vehicle kilometres by passenger vehicles and freight.
5. One of the primary objectives of the OIP is to ‘rapidly reduce carbon emissions, ensuring that Farnham and Waverley are on track for net zero by 2050’. Therefore, the dependency on private motorised vehicle travel needs to reduce across Farnham, to reduce congestion and improve the air quality of public spaces, which will support the path to the ‘Net Zero carbon ambition’. This in turn will support the people of Farnham to lead active and more healthy lifestyles and reduce the dominance of traffic in its communities.
6. There are currently poor walking and cycling facilities, and public transport links, across the town centre. The OIP set outs 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 shorter journeys, or as part of a longer journey, which is in line with the UK Government targets, for example as set out in ‘Gear Change’ (the walking and cycling plan for England published by the Department for Transport in 2020). The Avoid-Shift-Improve Framework (detailed in the OIP) sets out objectives to avoid or reduce the need to travel, and shift travel to sustainable modes. This suggests that any emerging design and Programme resource should be focused on maximising use of walking, cycling, and public transport for Farnham’s residents.

Option 1 – Castle Hill to Carpark boundary (yellow route)

7. This option provides a route that connects Castle Hill to the Upper Hart car park only.
8. Construction of this option would require use of the Upper Hart car park; therefore, it would reduce the number of available parking spaces through provision of the landing of the access road. It will require a need to maintain reasonable gradients and 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 likely lead to the loss of further car park spaces. This option would also reduce the flexibility of maximising the use of car parking capacity in the town centre, since the Upper Hart Car Park would be available only for those visiting Farnham from the north.
9. Table 1 below provides the existing number of spaces within the Upper Hart car park. For Option 1 – Castle Street to the car park boundary, on review of the potential design there could be an approximate loss of 60 parking spaces within the car park.

Table 1

Parking bay type	Existing	Option 1	Spaces Lost
General	327	276	-51
Private	25	16	-9
Contract	21	21	0
Total	373	313	-60

10. A design-based cost estimate was developed for the link road providing access only to the Upper Hart Car Park, Option 1. The outturn cost is estimated to be £8.6 million. It should be noted that these costs include allowances for land acquisition but not for the planning element for potential alterations or improvements required to infrastructure away from this route, ecological mitigation or utility diversion costs.

Option 2 – Castle Hill to West Street (red and yellow routes)

11. This option connects Castle Hill through Upper Hart car park, along Long Garden Way and the Hart and connects at a signalised junction with West Street.
12. It is acknowledged that if Castle Street was to become pedestrianised, thereby 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 provide access to the Upper Hart Car Park (and Lower Hart Car Park and Waitrose) from the north of Farnham.
13. Option 2 would connect to a new signalised junction with West Street and The Hart meaning that there could be additional travel time delay for existing journeys as a result.
14. Table 2 below provides the existing number of spaces within the Upper Hart car park. Option 2 – Castle Hill through Upper Hart car park, along Long Garden Way and the Hart and connects at a signalised junction with West Street and The Hart. On review of the potential design, there could be an approximate loss of 86 parking spaces within the car park.

Table 2

Parking bay type	Existing	Option 2	Spaces Lost
General	327	241	-86
Private	25	25	0
Contract	21	21	0
Total	373	287	-86

15. A design-based cost estimate was developed for the link from Castle Hill through Upper Hart car park, along Long Garden Way and the Hart and connecting at the signalised junction with West Street. The outturn cost is estimated to be £10.3 million. It should be noted that these costs include allowances for land acquisition but not for the planning element, for potential alterations or improvements required to infrastructure away from this route, ecological mitigation or utility diversion costs.
16. The proposed route is in close proximity and impacts on residential properties, University for the Creative Arts, Strugar Centre and Waitrose. As a result of the new route additional traffic may also be attracted to connecting street where the medical centre and Potters Gate CE Primary School are located. Construction of a new road in this location would introduce safety concerns for pedestrians accessing these facilities along with severance and reduced safety for vulnerable road users.

Comments Common to both Options

17. The re-distribution of traffic in the local area will result in higher noise levels in the surrounding area during construction and on opening. However, it is noted that the transfer of this vehicular traffic would benefit residents in Castle Street.
18. 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. It is also noted that the road is not likely to encourage modal shift away from the private car.
19. 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 the town centre from the north/south. However, it could be seen as an opportunity of a short cut through the town and attract more vehicular traffic in the long term.
20. There will be an impact on landscape and townscape as the route will introduce infrastructure to a currently semi-rural environment which is through the conservation area. Whilst extensions of the Built-Up Urban Area do occur in towns over time, the creeping urbanisation in this more sensitive area (within the conservation area and in the vicinity of a scheduled monument) may set a precedent which could prove unpopular with residents. The route is adjacent to existing buildings, 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.
21. There is a risk that, once a new route is constructed, housing developers may attempt to utilise a new highway connection as part of planning applications for new housing development. This is more likely with Option 2 as it provides a through-route; however, Option 1 would provide a shorter vehicle route for access from residential properties to the north of the town to access parking for the town centre which may make further development between Old Park Lane and Folly Hill more attractive.
22. 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 (a scheduled monument). Its construction could have a detrimental impact on the site's archaeology and heritage, which should be protected.
23. 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 there is a potential for protected and notable species to 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%.

24. New infrastructure for vehicular traffic does not align with local or national policy objectives to achieve carbon neutrality.
25. A new road will mean additional renewal and maintenance costs, which will fall under the remit of SCC as the asset owners. They will have to be fulfilled as part of the maintenance regime operated by the council.
26. There will be a major delay of delivering any related option for the town centre with the Upper Hart Link Road due to the additional time and resource required to support 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.
27. The current estimate of construction and land purchase for either Option 1 or Option 2, the Programme Team would be required to source additional external funding. As the Upper Hart Link would not align with local or national policy objectives to achieve carbon neutrality, it is unlikely that central government funding would be secured for this route.

Streetview extract from Google Maps

28. Proposed northern entry point of Upper Hart Link (Castle Hill)



29. Proposed southern entry point of Upper Hart Link (Upper Hart carpark)



Conclusion and Recommendation

1. Based on the elements presented above it is recognised that whilst there are some benefits, both options for the proposed Upper Hart link would have a significant negative impact on the local area.
2. Both routes introduce significant health and safety concerns and given the estimated cost, it is difficult to justify in economic terms. There is no external funding currently secured for this scheme.
3. It is recommended that further work on the route be paused and that it is removed from any emerging designs, and work focused on maximising sustainable travel options for Farnham's residents.

Contact Officer:

Elaine Martin
Programme Manager
Elaine.Martin@surreycc.go.uk
December 2022