

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Leader and Executive Member for Hampshire 2050 and Corporate Services
Date:	9 March 2023
Title:	Fleet and Surrounding Areas Transport Schemes Update
Report From:	Director of Hampshire 2050

Contact name: Hayley Thorn

Tel: 0370 7793 526

Email: hayley.thorn@hants.gov.uk

Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on local transport priorities in Fleet and the surrounding areas and gain agreement for a shortlist of potential schemes that should be investigated through commencement of feasibility studies.

Recommendation

2. That the Leader and Executive Member for Hampshire 2050 and Corporate Services approves the revised scheme priorities for Fleet as set out in paragraph 20 of this report.

Executive Summary

3. There is a need for the County Council to amend the scheme priorities in Fleet to reflect a changing funding climate and practical considerations around spending locally held Section 106 developer contributions.
4. In recent years there has been various development in Fleet and the surrounding areas, including sizeable developments at Queen Elizabeth Barracks, Church Crookham, and Hitches Lane, Fleet. To mitigate the impact of such developments on the highway network, developer contributions were taken to fund delivery of local transport improvement schemes. The opportunity to use contributions to match fund bids for Government Funding led to a previous scheme prioritisation that has the Fleet Station Junction scheme as the number one priority. The value of the scheme was in excess of what was held hence the approach to seek to attract additional funding. At the time, the Government's Pinch Point funding looked like a good opportunity and whilst Hampshire submitted a bid the fund was subsequently absorbed into what is now called the Levelling Up Fund. The criteria for bidding was then changed with the focus on priority areas for levelling up. Fleet is not listed as a priority area for levelling up.

5. There is now a need to change the approach to prioritisation to deliver the best package of scheme that can be delivered with the funding held locally and before the contributions expire.

Contextual information

6. In 2011 the Fleet Town Access Plan (TAP) was published which set out the transport strategy for Fleet and the surrounding areas of Church Crookham, Elvetham Heath and Ancells Farm. The Fleet TAP sought to provide a vision for improved accessibility for the area which could be used to inform future development plans and guide applications for transport infrastructure funding. At the time of preparing the Fleet TAP, Local Transport Plan 2 was the County Council's countywide transport strategy, with LTP3 adopted later in 2011, following the publication of the Fleet TAP.
7. The Fleet TAP and LTPs formed the basis of the local transport strategy that was used to inform planning decisions on highway matters and provided a basis for requesting developer contributions to mitigate the impact of development in the area. Much of the funding secured through developer contributions has now been spent on schemes relevant to the local transport strategy, however a significant amount of funding remains. The policy framework has moved on.
8. In 2022 the County Council consulted on the draft LTP4. This new transport strategy proposed a step change in the county council's approach to transport planning, with a shift away from planning for vehicles, towards planning for people and places. The new LTP is guided by two core principles: to significantly reduce dependency on the private car; and to provide a transport system that promotes high quality, prosperous places and puts people first. These guiding principles and associated policies within the LTP4 guide the county council's planning, delivery and operation of transport functions and infrastructure.

Developer Contributions Held

9. In 2010, planning permission was granted for a mixed use development at the Queen Elizabeth Barracks (QEB) in Church Crookham. The development consisted of up to 900 dwellings, 7,500 sqm of office space, a community centre, primary school, convenience store and greenspace. In order to mitigate the transport impact of this development, a Section 106 (S106) agreement was agreed in 2011 which required the developers to make a contribution of £3million to be used for off-site mitigation, including for measures identified in the Fleet TAP.

Previous Allocation of Developer Contributions

10. As part of the S106 agreement for the QEB development, Hart District Council was required to establish a steering group of local representatives to make recommendations to the County Council regarding allocations of the developer contributions. The steering group comprises representatives of the County Council, District Council and Church Crookham Parish Council. The steering group has been meeting since 2015, with the County Council taking due consideration of the steering group's views before committing expenditure of the QEB developer contributions.

11. In 2018, following engagement with the QEB steering group, a decision report was taken to the County Council's Executive Member for Environment and Transport that made recommendations to commence design work on four schemes, using the QEB funding. These schemes were:
 - Fleet Station Roundabout- Highway capacity improvements;
 - Windy Gap Junction- Congestion reduction;
 - Beacon Hill Road Corridor- Cycling improvements; and
 - Elvetham Heath Double Roundabouts- Safety and capacity improvements.
12. The recommendations within the 2018 report were approved and work was progressed to develop the above listed schemes. However, since this time only the Elvetham Heath/Fleet Road and Reading Road North/Hitches Lane double roundabout scheme has progressed to delivery. This scheme is currently being delivered through Section 278 works for the Hitches Lane development.
13. In 2020 a funding bid was submitted to the Department for Transport's (DfT) pinch point fund for the capacity improvements proposed to the Fleet Station Roundabout on the A3013. This funding opportunity was withdrawn by the DfT and a review of the business case for the scheme was undertaken in light of the emerging new emphasis on people and place. In the absence of funding, the review determined the scheme was not deliverable.
14. The case for progressing the congestion reduction scheme at the Windy Gap on the A323 at the junctions of Fleet Road and Aldershot Road, has also been reviewed. Whilst there may be a need for the scheme in the future, post-covid traffic levels are lower than previously predicted, and it is therefore considered that other schemes may be more aligned to the new Local Transport Plan.
15. Initial investigations have been undertaken into the feasibility of providing cycling infrastructure along the Beacon Hill Road corridor. However, since these investigations were undertaken an improved cycling connection has been provided by the shared use path that has been installed along Leipzig Road and Naishes Lane. The need for the Beacon Hill Road scheme has changed and any further study work is refocused on reviewing the provision of cycling infrastructure along this corridor, drawing on the outputs of the Hart Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) that is currently in development.

Revised Priorities

16. To inform the revised list of priorities for use of transport contributions in Fleet and surrounding areas, County Councillors representing the Fleet Town and Church Crookham and Ewshot Divisions were asked to share their views on residents' priorities for the area. Feedback was also sought from Hart District and Parish Councillors via the QEB Steering Group. The priorities identified through this engagement exercise are as follows (in no particular order):
 - installation of pedestrian crossings on Reading Road South;
 - improved walking and cycling links between Church Crookham and Calthorpe Park School;

- installation of pedestrian crossing in Crookham Village as part of wider links to Calthorpe Park School;
- review of traffic movements on Malthouse Bridge;
- banning right turns from the supermarket on Beacon Hill Road and the petrol station on Reading Road South;
- installation of a pedestrian crossing on Hitches Lane to enable crossing between the Hart Leisure Centre and Calthorpe Park School;
- improved walking and cycling routes on Hitches Lane between Elvetham Road roundabout and Emerald Avenue roundabout;
- measures to reduce vehicle speeds at the junction of Elvetham Road and Church Road;
- review of the traffic arrangements and pedestrian crossing facilities on the approach to Fleet Station;
- review the safety of the Upper Street junctions;
- Safety Improvements at the junction of Tweseldown Road and Beacon Hill Road Junction; and
- extension of the cycle lane on Norris Hill Road to Windy Gap Junction.

17. Work has previously been undertaken to review the Tweseldown Road and Beacon Hill Road junction, with a design to install a roundabout being considered undeliverable due to site constraints and high costs. However, this does not preclude further assessment being undertaken to consider lower cost interventions at this location. The extension to the Norris Hill cycle lane has also previously been investigated and the County Council is liaising with the developers of Hartland Village for this stretch of cycling infrastructure to be provided under Section 278 works.
18. Before any of the above proposals could be taken forward to scheme development, evidence would need to be gathered on the need for intervention, and the proposals assessed against the priorities within the emerging LTP4 and the Hart LCWIP once it has been developed. Once the strategic case and rationale for each proposal is established feasibility studies can be undertaken. The cost and time to undertake feasibility studies will vary for each of the schemes due to their varying scale and complexity and the capacity of County Council officers to undertake the work.
19. Several of the developer contributions held for the Fleet and surrounding areas have expiry dates attached to them, meaning that work should be undertaken to develop and deliver schemes as soon as possible to reduce the risk of monies having to be returned to the developers. As such it is recommended that work commences on undertaking feasibility studies for the above listed local priority schemes, except for the extension to the Norris Hill cycle way given the ongoing Section 278 discussions for this scheme.

20. It is noted that the developer contributions held for Fleet and the surrounding area is limited and will not be sufficient to fund development and delivery of all the priorities that have been identified. Therefore, a small number of schemes should be progressed for further study, with other schemes on the list revisited at a later date as funding allows. It is recommended that the following schemes are progressed for further study:

- installation of pedestrian crossings on Reading Road South;
- installation of a pedestrian crossing on Hitches Lane to enable crossing between the Hart Leisure Centre and Calthorpe Park School;
- improved walking and cycling routes on Hitches Lane between Elvetham Road roundabout and Emerald Avenue roundabout;
- improved walking and cycling links between Church Crookham and Calthorpe Park School;
- banning right turns from the supermarket on Beacon Hill Road and the petrol station on Reading Road South;
- safety improvements at the Albert Street, Clarence Road and Connaught Road junctions with Upper Street;
- safety improvements at the junction of Tweseldown Road and Beacon Hill Road; and
- review of traffic arrangements and pedestrian crossing facilities on the approach to Fleet Station.

21. The schemes recommended for further study have been subject to initial feasibility studies and further work would be required to develop detailed proposals. These schemes would support residents of Fleet and Church Crookham in accessing local facilities and services using active modes by adding to the network of safe and convenient walking and cycling routes. There is a strong policy basis within the emerging LTP4 for prioritising these schemes as they accord with the two guiding principles as well as a number of the core policies, including:

- putting people and places at the heart of our decisions (policy C1);
- transport strategies and schemes to be developed in accordance with consideration of all users (policy C3);
- support local living and reduce demands on transport (policy C5); and
- encourage sustainable travel behaviours (policy C6).

22. The Fleet TAP is also supportive of progressing these schemes as it recommends installation of pedestrian crossings on Reading Road South (scheme references PC17 and PC18 of the Fleet TAP) improved crossing links to Calthorpe Park School and improved cycling links along the northern length of Hitches Lane (scheme references PC5 and PC6 of the Fleet TAP).

Finance

23. There is £6.4million in developer contributions held for the Fleet and Church Crookham. Some of this funding has already been allocated to specific schemes as specified in the individual S106 agreements.

24. There is currently £2.1million in developer contributions held for the Fleet and Church Crookham area that is not currently allocated to a specific scheme. There is also £3.8million in developer contributions held for delivery of measures identified in the Fleet TAP, a number of which are identified as priorities in this report. It is anticipated that all the funding that is not already allocated for specific uses will be needed to progress the design and delivery of the schemes recommended for prioritisation in paragraph 20. If, however any funding remains, or further developer contributions are secured, feasibility studies will be undertaken for other schemes listed in paragraph 16.
25. Where the terms of the S106 agreements allow, developer contributions will be used to fund the feasibility and design work that is required to develop the prioritised schemes. Where S106 monies cannot be used in this way, feasibility studies will be funded through the County Council's core revenue budget or external funding sources, with delivery of schemes funded through developer contributions.

Consultation and Equalities

26. The proposals within this report have been shaped by engagement with County, District and Parish Councillors as representatives of their local communities. The most recent meeting of the QEB steering group was held on 20 January 2023 where proposals for transport improvements relating to the QEB development were discussed. These discussions were framed within the context of the County Council's emerging transport strategy, LTP4, which encourages a shift away from planning for vehicles, towards planning for people and places.
27. A neutral impact on people with protected characteristics has been identified from this decision. The undertaking of feasibility studies will not result in any change and therefore tangible impact. It is the delivery of schemes at a later stage that will deliver change and therefore will be subject to their own equalities impact assessments. Therefore, whilst any transport schemes that are identified as a result of the feasibility studies are expected to have positive impacts on a range of protected characteristics such as age, disability, pregnancy & maternity, poverty and rurality by providing improved access and connectivity by non-motorised transport, they will be subject to their own Equalities Impact Assessment as schemes progress to delivery.

Climate Change Impact Assessments

28. Hampshire County Council utilises two decision-making tools to assess the carbon emissions and resilience of its projects and decisions. These tools provide a clear, robust, and transparent way of assessing how projects, policies and initiatives contribute towards the County Council's climate change targets of being carbon neutral and resilient to the impacts of a 2°C temperature rise by 2050. This process ensures that climate change considerations are built into everything the Authority does.
29. The development of feasibility studies, as is proposed in this report will not, in itself have any discernible impact on climate. Any impacts will come at a later

stage should any schemes be taken forward for delivery. However, in due course, the delivery of measures to improve walking and cycling facilities in Fleet and the surrounding area has potential to reduce carbon emissions due to a reduction in car trips that could be achieved.

Climate Change Adaptation

30. The climate change adaptation tool was not applicable to this report because the decision relates to a number of possible individual projects, which are subject to assessment individually at the point at which they come forward. The document itself is more strategic in nature and therefore doesn't have a direct impact on climate change.

Carbon Mitigation

31. The climate change mitigation tool was not applicable to this report because the decision relates to a number of possible individual projects, which are subject to assessment individually at the point at which they come forward. The document itself is more strategic in nature and therefore there are no clear mitigation measures which could be taken forward at this time.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	Yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
<u>Title</u> Decision - Church Crookham Transport Strategy About the Council Hampshire County Council (hants.gov.uk)	<u>Date</u> 24/04/2018
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents	
<p>The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)</p>	
<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

A neutral impact on people with protected characteristics has been identified from this decision. The undertaking of feasibility studies will not result in any change and therefore tangible impact. It is the delivery of schemes at a later stage that will deliver change and therefore will be subject to their own equalities impact assessments. Therefore, whilst any transport schemes that are identified as a result of the feasibility studies are expected to have positive impacts on a range of protected characteristics such as age, disability, pregnancy & maternity, poverty and rurality by providing improved access and connectivity by non-motorised transport, they will be subject to their own Equalities Impact Assessment as schemes progress to delivery.