

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

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| Decision Maker: | Executive Member for Environment and Transport |
| Date: | 13 March 2018 |
| Title: | Farnborough Growth Package and Blackwater Valley Gold Grid |
| Report From: | Director of Economy, Transport and Environment |

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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That the outcomes of the public and stakeholder consultation on the Farnborough Growth Package and Blackwater Valley Gold Grid as set out in Section 4 of this report are noted.
- 1.2 That approval is given to progress design of the following schemes as a high priority in the short term:
 - New access from Invincible Road to provide a new exit onto the A327 Elles Road, sufficient to address the congestion issues in Invincible Road; and;
 - Blackwater Valley Gold Grid measures to improve the forecourt at Farnborough Main Station and general improvements to the Gold Route.
- 1.3 That Lynchford Road is identified as a priority scheme, and that further feasibility design work is undertaken to identify a deliverable scheme, including engagement with the local community and consideration of potential to mitigate air quality issues on the Blackwater Valley Relief Road, the feasibility work also taking account of potential constraints, including:
 - Funding availability; and
 - Availability of land from the Ministry of Defence.
- 1.4 That authority be delegated to the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment to identify schemes on the A325 Farnborough Road corridor on which to progress feasibility design work as a reserve to the identified prioritised schemes above.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The purpose of this paper is to identify the schemes that should be prioritised for further development and delivery in the short term to 2021, as part of the Farnborough Growth Package and Blackwater Valley Gold Grid schemes, using the funding that has been provisionally secured through the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership's (EM3 LEP's) Local Growth Deal, in order to

support economic growth in Farnborough and the wider Blackwater Valley area.

2.2. This paper seeks to:

- set out the background to the Farnborough Growth Package and Blackwater Valley Gold Grid schemes;
- summarise the outcomes of the recent public and stakeholder consultation on the Farnborough Growth Package and Blackwater Valley Gold Grid;
- in the light of the consultation outcomes and other relevant factors, identify the schemes that should be prioritised for implementation in the short term, so that these can progressed to the next stage of development;
- Outline the next steps, including the need to develop an overall Transport Strategy for the Farnborough area to support growth over the period to 2032.

3. Contextual information and Finance

- 3.1. A Decision Paper was presented to the Executive Member for Environment and Transport at his decision day in November 2017, which provided full background information on the Farnborough Growth Package and Blackwater Valley Gold Grid projects. This is provided as Appendix C for reference.
- 3.2. Farnborough has been identified by the EM3 LEP as one of its four Growth Towns, where economic and housing growth will be focussed. Farnborough's economy has seen a significant increase in high value jobs in recent years, based around the Airport and nearby Business Parks. Whilst the Farnborough Airshow is of huge economic importance to the area, it is only a biennial event. However, the Farnborough International Exhibition and Conference Centre is due to open in Spring 2018 and will provide a permanent facility for the Airshow and for other exhibitions and conferences throughout the year.
- 3.3. In terms of housing, the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment work has identified a requirement for 436 homes per annum to be provided in Rushmoor Borough Council's area. The committed Aldershot Urban Extension (3,850 homes) will provide over half of Rushmoor's housing need over the period of the emerging Local Plan to 2032, but other housing will be essential both in and around Farnborough. Evidence supporting the Local Plan has identified potential for additional housing in and around the town centre.
- 3.4. In order to accommodate the increased travel demands associated with this planned economic and housing growth, the County Council has historically submitted Expressions of Interest to the EM3 LEP, in order to secure funding for the Farnborough Growth Package. The original Expressions of Interest were focussed on the A325 Farnborough Road, particularly in the town centre. However, the A3011 Lynchford Road corridor has emerged as a higher priority for investment more recently, due to:
 - Existing peak period congestion problems; and
 - Its role supporting Farnborough as a Growth Town, ongoing expansion of the Business Parks on the south side of the town and the new Conference and Exhibition Centre, and the Aldershot Urban Extension, which will have increased travel demands in the years ahead.

- 3.5. Finally, the need to address issues in Invincible Road has arisen in 2017, following the knock on impact of further retail redevelopment in Farnborough Town Centre, which has led to significant congestion issues during busy retail periods in and around Invincible Road. These are damaging Farnborough's reputation as an attractive retail centre. In summary, both projects aim to improve transport accessibility to and from Farnborough in order to accommodate the additional travel demands associated with economic growth, which has been recognised as a Growth Town by the EM3 LEP.
- 3.6. The EM3 LEP has provisionally allocated a total of £6.7 million of Local Growth Fund over the period to 2021 to the Farnborough Growth Package, matched by £2 million of local contributions.
- 3.7. In partnership with Surrey County Council and others, the County Council submitted a separate Expression of Interest for the Blackwater Valley Gold Grid. The EM3 LEP has provisionally allocated a total of £4 million of Local Growth Fund to the Blackwater Valley Gold Grid project, which will enhance bus infrastructure and facilities along the Gold Route One. The funding is shared between Hampshire and Surrey County Councils and matched by investment made in new buses by Stagecoach.
- 3.8. The County Council has also provisionally secured a total of £0.25 million of Design Advancement Fund from the EM3 LEP in 2017/18 and 2018/19 towards the Farnborough Growth Package, which will contribute towards the design costs.
- 3.9. The County Council commissioned Atkins to undertake feasibility work to identify a range of potential interventions for inclusion within the Farnborough Growth Package and Blackwater Valley Gold Grid projects. This focussed on three key areas:
 - A325 Farnborough Road Corridor;
 - A3011 Lynchford Road; and
 - Farnborough Town Centre.
- 3.10. This work was not specifically constrained by the currently available budgets and has therefore identified the full range of potential transport interventions that could be delivered to support growth in Farnborough. This will require prioritisation for what can be delivered in the short term to 2021, with currently available funding.
- 3.11. Whilst there is a focus on identifying the schemes that should be delivered in the short term with the available funding, the feasibility work provides an evidence base that can be used to develop a medium to longer term transport strategy and plan for the Farnborough area over the period of the emerging Local Plan.

4. Consultation and Equalities

- 4.1. In the report presented to the Executive Member for Environment and Transport on the 14 November 2017, approval was secured to undertake a detailed public and stakeholder consultation on both the Farnborough Growth Package and Blackwater Valley Gold Grid proposals.

- 4.2. A detailed public and stakeholder consultation was undertaken from the 28 November 2017 to 23 January 2018 inclusive. This was primarily publicised through a comprehensive mailshot to local residents and businesses across most of Farnborough, together with a press release, information on the County Council website and through social media. Three public exhibitions were held and attended by over 350 people and the County Council also attended a meeting of “North Camp Matters”, a campaigning group of residents and businesses from part of the study area. The consultation material was also available online on the County Council’s website.
- 4.3. The consultation material (Appendix D):
- explained the need to invest in transport in Farnborough and the purpose of the consultation;
 - presented a range of “in principle” transport intervention options within the study area for both the Farnborough Growth Package and Blackwater Valley Gold Grid;
 - Outlined the recommended prioritisation for short term investment to address congestion issues in Invincible Road and Lynchford Road, together with the Gold Grid proposals; and
 - Outlined the process moving forward to scheme implementation.
- 4.4. A consultation questionnaire was available both online and on paper. A total of 583 responses have been received. 343 of these were completed online and 240 were completed on paper. In addition, a total of 17 emails were received commenting directly on the proposals. These have been considered alongside the responses to the consultation question asking for further general comments. In terms of those responding, the vast majority were either local residents (349 people) or Member of the Public (175 people). Only 10 responses were from Businesses.
- 4.5. A Consultation Report, which provides a detailed analysis of the consultation outcomes is provided in Appendix E. Key aspects of this will now be summarised.

Current Travel Behaviour

- 4.6. The consultation questionnaire initially asked questions about people’s travel behaviour in Farnborough. Starting with how people travel in Farnborough, of those that responded to this question, around 90% travel by car, two thirds walk and just under a third use public transport or cycle. It is important to note that a significant number of people use more than one mode. Nearly 90% of people walking, cycling or using public transport also travel by car, and of the people travelling by car, around three quarters also walk, cycle or use public transport. This highlights the need to ensure that scheme designs cater for all these modes.
- 4.7. The three most important reasons for people travelling are shopping (83%), leisure (73%) and work (63%). At least 85% of people responding noted at least two reasons to travel.
- 4.8. The vast majority of people responding travel frequently, with 78% travelling at least five days per week. In terms of when people travel, this is spread across weekdays, with lunchtime the least likely time to travel. At least 80% of people travel at weekends and 90% said they travel at more than one time of day.

- 4.9. In terms of where people travel, this was evenly spread between all sections of the A3011 Lynchford Road, A325 Farnborough Road and Alexandra Road, with around two thirds of people saying they used these roads. Around half of respondents said they use the A327 Meudon Avenue/Elles Road and Queen's Avenue.
- 4.10. The final question on travel behaviour asked whether people use alternative routes in Farnborough to avoid congestion. 28% said yes and a further 29% said sometimes. A wide range of alternative routes were noted.
- 4.11. It should of course be noted that the survey responses were overwhelmingly from local residents, whereas those using the more strategic road links involved in the study area would also be expected to include residents and business travellers from a wider area.

Overall Results – Farnborough Growth Package

- 4.12. The overall levels of support from the local survey for the proposed components of the Farnborough Growth Package are as follows:
- Invincible Road - 74% in favour; 9% against; 17% maybe
 - A325 Farnborough Road - 59% in favour; 16% against; 25% maybe
 - A3011 Lynchford Road - 43% in favour; 30% against; 27% maybe

Overall Priorities – Farnborough Growth Package

- 4.13. The consultation also asked whether people agreed with the proposed priorities for implementation in the short term, which are to deliver a scheme to address issues in Invincible Road and at least some of the improvements in Lynchford Road.
- 4.14. The consultation response is that 60% are in favour of these priorities and 40% are against. If people were not in favour with the proposed priorities, they were asked to suggest alternatives. Whilst a significant range of responses were made, a dominant theme was for improvements on the A325 or specific schemes on the A325.

Lynchford Road

- 4.15. The key outcomes of the consultation on the Lynchford Road proposals are as follows:
- In terms of people's priorities for improvement, "improving traffic flow and reducing delays" was the highest priority (67% as 1st or 2nd priority), followed closely by "improving pedestrian and cycle provision" (63% as 1st or 2nd priority). "Improving public transport facilities" and "Initiatives to reduce the number of car trips" were less well supported (equivalent figures of 43% and 38% respectively);
 - Opinion is significantly split on many scheme options. The proportion voting "Do Something" (i.e. for at least one of the two proposed scheme options) is around 50%, with the remaining voting for "Do Nothing" or an Alternative option. As an individual category, "Do Nothing" secured more votes than any proposed scheme option;
 - The section with the most support for "Do Something" is St Alban's Roundabout to Peabody Road, with a small majority in favour of Option 1, which would widen the existing A3011;

- For the section in front of Lille Barracks, the consultation identified the main priorities are to “Retain on-street car parking in front of the shops” and “widen the road to provide more capacity”, with provision of a cycle track a lower priority; and
- There is a split view on the short term option to widen east of Lille Barracks (34% in favour, 34% against, 32% maybe).

4.16. There is clearly a mixed picture in the consultation on Lynchford Road from the predominantly local resident response. There is general support for the principles that improvements should “improve traffic flows and reduce delays” and also “improve pedestrian and cycle provision”. For the section in front of Lille Barracks, the most important factors are to provide more traffic capacity and retain on-street parking.

4.17. In terms of responses on specific scheme elements, there are more people in favour of one of the scheme options than “Do Nothing”, although the number voting for “Do Nothing” is substantial.

Invincible Road

4.18. The consultation proposed the principle of a new access from Invincible Road onto the A327 Elles Road and the questionnaire asked whether people supported this principle of this scheme. 74% do support this proposal, with only 9% explicitly against. 17% voted “Maybe”.

4.19. Of all the proposals in the consultation, this scheme has the most support.

A325 Farnborough Road

4.20. A number of potential interventions have been identified for the A325 Farnborough Road corridor, although these are in less detail than what is shown for Lynchford Road and people were not given a choice of different scheme options.

4.21. The key outcomes of the consultation on the A325 Farnborough Road proposals are as follows:

- In terms of priorities for improvement, “improving traffic flow and reducing delays” was the highest priority (71% as 1st or 2nd priority), followed by “Improving pedestrian and cycle provision” (61% as 1st or 2nd priority). “Improving public transport facilities” and “Initiatives to reduce the number of car trips” were less well supported, with equivalent figures of 46% and 31% respectively; and
- In terms of the individual suggested interventions, explicit support (“Yes”) was between 61% and 43%, with most over 50%. Objection (“No”) was between 15% and 27%. Between 22% and 31% voted “Maybe”. For most interventions, there were at least twice as many people voting “Yes” than “No”.

4.22. The consultation has shown general support for the principle of improvements along the A325 Farnborough Road, together with support for the majority of specific proposed interventions.

Blackwater Valley Gold Grid

- 4.23. Working with Stagecoach, a specific requirement for improvements at Farnborough Main Station has been identified to reduce bus delays on Gold Route One. However, any scheme would aim to improve accessibility at the station for all modes. A number of other locations along Route One have also been identified, where buses incur delay. The consultation did not explicitly define these other locations, but sought opinions as to whether there was support for the principle of additional bus priority through infrastructure and/or technology and improvements to bus stops.
- 4.24. In the consultation, 60% support the improvements at Farnborough Main, with only 15% against and 25% voting "Maybe". In terms of general improvements, 46% were in favour and 17% against, with 37% voting "Maybe".

Other Comments

- 4.25. The consultation provided an opportunity for general comments to be made about the proposals and any transport. A summary of the key themes raised and an officer response is included in Appendix E. These comments also include specific email representations made by organisations and representative groups. The County Council welcomes these responses, which provide useful information that can be used in the ongoing design work.
- 4.26. In relation to the proposals on the A3011 Lynchford Road, the most frequent comments made were:
- Concerns about the impact of the proposals on North Camp, including noise, pollution and road safety;
 - The need to develop alternative routes to the A3011 to access the A331 Blackwater Valley Relief Road;
 - Concerns about impact on pedestrian/cycle access to/from Wavell School and changes only recently made to crossing as part of Queen's Roundabout scheme;
 - Concerns about impact on Old Lynchford Road between Queen's Roundabout and St Alban's Roundabout including loss of parking, loss of vegetation, moving road closer to properties and impact on house prices;
 - Concerns that the scheme is dependent on acquiring MoD land;
 - Queries on how compensation would work;
 - A3011 not sufficiently congested to justify improvements; and
 - Subways or footbridges should replace at-grade crossings.
- 4.27. In relation to the proposals on the A325 Farnborough Road, the most frequent comments made were:
- Need to consider congestion/road safety issues at Farnborough Gate Retail Park;
 - Concerns about restricting movements in/out of Salisbury Road at its junction with Rectory Road, east of Clockhouse Roundabout;
 - Comments re Clockhouse Roundabout, including concerns about pedestrian movement/safety;
 - Suggestions/comments for Ham & Blackbird junction; and
 - Comments re cycle infrastructure on the A325.

4.28. In relation to Invincible Road, the most frequent comment was that the issue should have been addressed earlier.

4.29. In relation to the Blackwater Valley Gold Grid, the most frequent comments relate to issues at the Farnborough Main Station forecourt.

4.30. People also made a number of general comments and the most frequent of these were:

- Improve/provide high quality pedestrian/cycle facilities;
- Remove bus lanes;
- Complaints about previous Queen's Roundabout improvement project, especially about its construction;
- Don't signalise more roundabouts;
- Consider improvements between M3 J4a and Farnborough; and
- Discourage cars and encourage walking and cycling.

4.31. In addition to the above, the following responses should be specifically noted:

- The Aldershot Garrison and Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) have specifically objected to the proposals to widen Lynchford Road in front of Lille Barracks for safety and security reasons, as this would require the Garrison to cede land on this northern boundary. However, there is recognition of the wider benefits of the Farnborough Growth Package proposals and the Garrison and DIO are keen to enter discussions with the County Council to explore possible solutions. The County Council welcomes this opportunity; and
- Following an evening meeting of the North Camp Matters Association, where the County Council presented the Farnborough Growth Package and Blackwater Valley Gold Grid, the Association has provided a comprehensive response to the consultation, which is primarily focussed on ensuring that the quality of life for the community is maintained, and has made a number of specific comments and suggestions. As noted in the recommendations, the County Council is keen to work closely with the local community through further design work to ensure that any proposals consider the needs of local people.

Equalities

4.32. An Equalities Impact has been undertaken. In relation to the proposed decision to undertake further design work, this identifies a neutral impact. It notes the need to consider equality issues through the design work and to produce further Equality Impact Assessments, in support of any future decisions to progress schemes to implementation.

5. Other Key Issues to Consider

5.1. Whilst the consultation results are an important consideration in the decision as to which schemes should be prioritised for investment in the Farnborough Growth Package and Blackwater Valley Gold Grid, there are a number of other factors to consider.

5.2. The bulk of the funding to deliver interventions is Local Growth Fund from the EM3 LEP. The funding is conditional on demonstrating that the investment would support and safeguard economic growth and housing. Farnborough has

been identified by the EM3 LEP as a Growth Town, with specific economic activity targets. Section 3 provides more detail on these issues and they are a key consideration in the decision making process on where investment should be prioritised.

- 5.3. Any package of schemes put forward also have to demonstrate that they can deliver at least “Good” Value for Money in a Department for Transport compliant transport economic appraisal, submitted to the EM3 LEP. The main benefits in an economic appraisal are usually from demonstrating that the proposed scheme will deliver journey time reductions, although wider economic benefits are also a key part of the overall assessment.
- 5.4. The A331 Blackwater Valley Relief Road has been identified by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) as exceeding air quality standards for nitrogen dioxide. A range of interventions is being developed to address this issue. It is important that any proposals developed for the Farnborough Growth Package or Blackwater Valley Gold Grid do not compromise the need to improve air quality issues on the A331, and if possible should make a positive contribution to its improvement.
- 5.5. The section of Lynchford Road east of Peabody Road is bordered on its south side by the operational Lille Barracks. There is no guarantee at this stage that a solution can be found to secure land to deliver improvements to this section of Lynchford Road, but the County Council will work closely with the Garrison and DIO with the aim of finding a mutually acceptable solution. Without securing MoD land here, any widening elsewhere on Lynchford Road is likely to be of limited benefit.
- 5.6. The key component of the Blackwater Valley Gold Grid is the proposal to improve the operation of the forecourt area of Farnborough Main Station. As this area is not part of the public highway and is controlled by South Western Railway (SWR), this does provide additional delivery risks that will need to be managed.

6. Conclusions and Proposed Way Forward

- 6.1. The public and stakeholder consultation is a key consideration in the decision making process. This has provided support for the proposed priority to implement measures to address issues in Invincible Road and to deliver improvements to Lynchford Road, together with support for the separately funded Blackwater Valley Gold Grid proposals.
- 6.2. However, whilst there is overall support for the proposed funding priority, it should be noted that a significant proportion of people responding to the consultation do not support the specific proposals in Lynchford Road and in overall terms, improvements here are less well supported than the proposals to improve either Invincible Road or the A325 Farnborough Road.
- 6.3. In terms of design principles, the consultation has established that increasing traffic capacity to reduce delays and improved provision for pedestrians and cyclists are the primary improvements requested.
- 6.4. The report has noted the wider range of considerations, including the congestion, economic growth and housing drivers that led to Lynchford Road being identified as a priority scheme in the consultation material. In the light of

the consultation results, the County Council has written to Rushmoor Borough Council to seek its view on the issue of prioritising investment in Lynchford Road. The response indicates support for prioritising the Invincible Road and Lynchford Road schemes.

7. Recommended next Steps

- 7.1. Taking all factors into account, it is therefore proposed that the following approach is taken.
- 7.2. Work should progress as a priority to design a scheme in Invincible Road that provides a new access onto the A327 Elles Road, sufficient to address the current congestion problems.
- 7.3. Work should progress as a priority to design the Blackwater Valley Gold Grid projects.
- 7.4. Lynchford Road should be identified as a priority scheme, and further feasibility design work should be undertaken to identify a deliverable scheme, taking account of the identified constraints. The work should be undertaken in partnership with the local community.
- 7.5. In recognition of the constraints on Lynchford Road, further feasibility design work should be undertaken on schemes on the A325 Farnborough Road corridor as reserve schemes for implementation in the short term. Even if these schemes are not delivered in the short term, this work would not be abortive, as it would put them in a strong position to secure any future funding.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Strategic Plan**

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| 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 |

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

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.)

Document

Location

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1. 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 under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

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

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) 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.

1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

The Equalities Impact Statement has identified no impact on groups with protected characteristics. At this stage, the decision is to progress further design work, which will take account of equalities impact. Further Equalities Impact Assessments will be required to support any subsequent decisions to implement scheme proposals.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. No impact is anticipated from this decision on issues of crime and disorder.

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?
- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

The decision relates to undertaking further design work and does not in itself have an impact on climate change. The further design work will consider climate change impacts, which will be considered in any subsequent decision to implement any scheme proposals.