



# Response to the Farnham Infrastructure Plan Town Centre proposals

## Introduction

1. The Farnham Cycling Campaign exists to promote cycling in the Farnham area and is open to residents of all ages and abilities, including experienced and inexperienced cyclists and electric bikers. Our response is based on our combined knowledge and detailed understanding of cycling in and around the town centre.
2. We welcome the opportunity to comment on the Farnham Infrastructure Plan (FIP) and we commend its objectives, which are worth repeating. They are:
  - to rapidly reduce carbon emissions, ensuring that Farnham and Waverley are on track for net zero by 2050
  - provide well-connected communities across Farnham and the surrounding area
  - support the economic vitality of Farnham and enable sustainable growth across the wider surrounding area
  - improve the quality of place in Farnham with clean air, healthy lifestyles, and less dominance of traffic on communities
3. We believe that cycling can make a huge contribution to achieving every one of these objectives.
4. There is a substantial body of empirical evidence, including five local surveys (only one of which was undertaken by the Farnham Cycle Campaign) showing that there is a massive pent-up demand for people to cycle in Farnham. It's no exaggeration to say that there is hardly a garage in Farnham that doesn't contain a bicycle.
5. Government figures show that in England, cycle use continues to grow, propelled by improved infrastructure and new technologies, particularly electric bicycles. The ownership and use of cycles nationally has been increasing steadily since 2002, and during the pandemic cycling levels reached the highest levels ever, with increases seen in trips, stages and miles cycled. The most recent National Travel Attitudes Survey concluded that half of adults would be encouraged to cycle more with safer roads and off-road and segregated cycle paths.
6. Delivered correctly, the FIP therefore presents an opportunity to unlock this enormous potential.

## **A flawed consultation**

7. Given the potential benefits to the town centre, we are deeply disappointed that neither of the consultation options include any significant cycling infrastructure.
8. We recognise that not everyone is able to leave their car at home. But we need a dramatic reduction in the use of cars by those that can – a modal shift – if we are to achieve the FIP's objectives. Therefore, planning and infrastructure for alternatives to the private car should be at the heart of any plan to boost the use of sustainable travel to the town centre.
9. However, the reverse appears to be true. The town centre development plan has been divorced from the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) process. Our repeated requests for up-to-date drafts of the LCWIP have been refused. We were promised that the LCWIP would be circulated in October but are now told that it won't be available until an unspecified date in 2023.
10. Without knowing what the walking and cycling strategies are, it is virtually impossible for any member of the public to respond to the town centre proposals coherently. The conversation is reduced to debating which car travel options are best, rather than about how we promote sustainable alternatives.
11. Furthermore, if the two projects are disconnected as they seem to be, the risk is that expensive work may be done to the streets of Farnham which either preclude the introduction of cycling, walking or bus infrastructure, or may have to be undone at further cost to the council taxpayer when the LCWIP strategies are finalised.

## **Detailed response – general points**

12. To unlock the benefits of cycling we need a joined-up network of cycle routes that are safe, convenient and high quality connecting the main travel generators (the schools, the station, the shops etc.) This will necessarily include continuous routes through the town centre. But these are entirely absent from the current plans and there is no indication that any consideration has been given to them.
13. This means that if and when a cycle network is built for Farnham, it would have a town centre shaped hole in the middle. A cycle network built with severance points in the centre will probably anger many residents and would certainly reduce the attractiveness of cycling for many people. It will also increase the potential for conflict with pedestrians, if cyclists who feel unsafe sharing the road are forced to use the pavements, or it will further delay motorists, who will not be able to overtake cyclists who do use the roads.
14. We recognise that there may be stretches of road that are too narrow to accommodate segregated cycling lanes, but it does not apply to all of them. We therefore recommend that traffic engineers should be instructed to look into the possibility of introducing cycle lanes along every road within the FIP town centre boundary and/or to consider interventions that will improve the safety of inexperienced cyclists using these routes.
15. The consultation seems to take an artificially narrow view of what constitutes the town centre. It seems arbitrary, for example that East Street is excluded given that the Brightwells Centre is soon to open, or that the route to the station – vitally important for residents, visitors and town centre workers alike - has been excluded. We believe that a broader

approach is needed if we are to genuinely connect communities and the wider area. A number of our detailed points below reflect this. We call upon the Board to bring forward a route map to deliver this wider rejuvenation of the town.

#### Detailed response – specific points

16. We support the inclusion of **cycle parking** as part of the FIP and we call on the Board to consider increasing this and to make sure that it is high quality, secure and accessible to all sorts of bicycles, including all-ability bicycles. The location of the cycle parking should be consistent with the cycling routes through the town centre (as yet unknown).
17. We support the use of **Advanced Stop lines** at every junction.
18. We particularly support the introduction of **20mph speed restrictions** across the town centre and call on the Board to consider introducing this restriction across a much wider area of the town.
19. We have been given to understand that the council proposes to develop the **Scholars' Greenway** as an East-west cycling and walking route. This crosses Castle Street, from Long Garden Walk to Park Row. However, the FIP provides no connection between these two halves of Scholars Way. A pedestrian and cycling crossing is needed to join them, along with a north-south cycle lane(s) to complete this important route.
20. The proposal to convert **South Street** to two-way traffic will make this route considerably less attractive to cyclists. We believe that the council should therefore move quickly to secure a route through the Brightwells development, before the developers leave, to secure an alternative north-south cycle route (see below).
21. **Park Row.** Although there are road markings to require cars to give way to other road users in Park Row these appear to have insufficient impact. Car drivers turning into Park Row appear surprised to encounter oncoming cyclists and pedestrians. We recommend clear signs at eye level to warn drivers what to expect.
22. **Bear Lane.** Contraflow needed so that cyclists can travel south.
23. **The Woolmead, end of Bear Lane to The Borough.** There is room for cycle lanes on either side of the road if the area occupied by the pavement behind the current developers hoarding was used. We would like clarification on the proposals are for the one way system in Woolmead and East St.
24. **Brightwells - Threadneedle St to new bridge over the Wey.** We strongly recommend a cycle track north/south through Brightwells from East St at Threadneedle St. Threadneedle St is the widest access street with the lowest footfall. This will provide a north/south route to/from the Station. It will also attract more cyclists to use Threadneedle St to access Brightwells from other side entrances. Pedestrians and other road users will know where to expect cyclists. The Brightwells route will reduce the cyclist/pedestrian conflict from the eastern section of Borelli's Walk and the old footbridge. We predict that cyclists will cycle in Brightwells anyway if there is no designated route both because it is a destination as well as a through route. We feel it is urgent to address this issue as we know the developers are leaving soon.

25. **End of Brightwells east alongside the river Wey.** The path alongside the River Wey needs to be upgraded to provide a high quality shared use path for cyclists and pedestrians. A cycle lane could be continued alongside or through the Pump House land to connect the retail and business park, joining the Guildford Road at the side of the territorial army buildings. From there a cycle path could be provided along the current grass verges on the south of Guildford Road as far as the Shepherd and Flock roundabout.
26. **The Borelli Walk.** The path should be widened and signposted to accommodate shared use. A pedestrian and cycle crossing should be considered at the end of Borellis walk to allow safe access to Gostrey meadow for all users.
27. **End of South St. to Hickley's corner-A31.** The pavement here is wide enough to accommodate a cycle lane. There is an obvious straight sight line across the A31 leading to the station which would accommodate a cycle track if the barriers were removed.
28. **Hickley's corner to Long Bridge via Abbey St.** There is adequate space for a cycle route here.
29. **Longbridge-A287- Downing St.** We understand there will be a speed table on the bridge, which will need to be shared use due to width. North/South cycle lanes on either side of Longbridge would be possible if the few car parking spaces in front of Hawthorn Lodge were removed. There is ample room for residents parking behind the building.
30. **Downing St.** There is room for both pavement widening and a hybrid cycle track going north as far as Upper Church Lane. Cars should be advised to give way to cyclists at the narrowest stretch. Advanced stop for cyclists at the top of the street will be useful as it is a hill at this point.
31. **Longbridge to the Maltings.** Access to the Maltings and through it to Red Lion Lane. This is an ideal route for cyclists and other users to avoid traffic but the path to the Maltings and the bridge is currently unsuitable for shared use and would need widening.
32. **Downing St. to West Street.** West St appears wide enough to accommodate cycle lanes on either side. We understand there are some issues regarding parking bays.
33. **The Borough.** If, as seems likely, a segregated cycle lane is not possible along the Borough, then car drivers must be asked not to try to overtake cyclists using this route.

The Farnham Cycle Campaign

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