

Slough Borough Council

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| Report To: | Cabinet |
| Date: | 20 th May 2024 |
| Subject: | Destination Farnham Road |
| Lead Member: | Cllr Paul Kelly -Highways, Housing and Transport. |
| Chief Officer: | Pat Hayes - Executive Director Regeneration, Housing and Environment |
| Contact Officer: | Savio DeCruz – Associate Director Operations |
| Ward(s): | Farnham, Baylis and Stoke and Cippenham Meadows |
| Key Decision: | YES |
| Exempt: | NO |
| Decision Subject To Call In: | YES |
| Appendices: | Appendix 1A - B – Consultation responses Appendix 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drawing numbers SBC-TH-MP- 00534-01• Drawing numbers SBC-TH-MP- 00534-02• Drawing numbers SBC-TH-MP- 00534-03• Drawing numbers SBC-TH-MP- 00534-04• Drawing numbers SBC-TH-MP- 00534-05• Drawing numbers SBC-TH-MP- 00534-06 Appendix 3 – Cycle count survey data Appendix 4 – Responses from Statutory Consultees and Officers Comments Appendix 5 – Equalities Impact Assessment |

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1. The report aims to present the consultation responses, outline the revised proposals, request authorisation to prepare fit for construction drawings, and proceed with the construction works for the Destination Farnham Road scheme.

- 1.2. The proposed scheme intends to provide improvements that facilitate economic growth resulting in businesses retaining stability, job creation but also deal with issues that tend to result from areas which are successful, such anti-social behaviour, littering, inconsiderate parking and crime.
- 1.3. This report aligns the Destination Farnham Road scheme objectives with the borough's Corporate Improvement and Recovery Plan. Corporate Plan 2023-27 (A fresh start) and the Local Transport Plan 3.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) Approve the carry-forward of £2.6m of unspent 2023/24 capital budget for the Destination Farnham Road Scheme into the 2024/25 capital programme
- b) Amend the General Fund Capital Programme for 2024/25 to 2027/28 to reflect a capital budget for Destination Farnham Road of £2.6m in 2024/25 and £7.5m in 2025/26
- c) Agree the final preliminary designs for the Destination Farnham Road scheme as set out in Appendix 2.
- d) Delegate authority to the Executive Director for Regeneration, Housing and Environment, in consultation with the Lead Member for Highways, Housing and Transport, to consider any statutory representations and decide whether to make the necessary traffic regulation orders,
- e) Approve the commencement of a procurement process for construction works and for an update report be brought back to Cabinet to approve the appointed contractor.

Reason:

In June 2022 officers submitted a bid to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities for the Destination Farnham Road project and in February 2023 Slough was awarded £9,292,149 through the Levelling Up Fund Round 2 (LUF2). The project is to implement strategic transport infrastructure works to support the development of high-quality places that will enhance the local economy. The aim of the Levelling Up 2 Fund is to foster a sense of community, local pride, and belonging by empowering local leaders and communities, improving public services, and increasing productivity in areas that are lagging behind.

The Destination Farnham Road bid focused on interventions to improve north-south transport links and to transform Farnham Road District Centre into a vibrant destination that benefits local communities. Enhancing connections to Slough Town Centre and its key transport hubs would improve access to employment and training opportunities for residents in Slough.

The proposed scheme aims to revitalise the Farnham Road (A355) corridor by transforming its public realm, in a way that prioritises walking and cycling, and improves bus priority through signal upgrades and the enforcement of parking restrictions. In addition the scheme aims to provide space for businesses such as small food shops to apply for pavement licences that facilitate Café style/outside dining.

This report presents the consultation responses and the revised scheme drawings for the Destination Farnham Road Scheme. It further seeks approval to develop fit for construction documents and construct the scheme.

Why Farnham Road?

Slough's strategic connections have been vital to its growth and success, helping to make it the UK's most productive town in 2019 (Centre for Cities). However, this growth has constrained local movement on key corridors in the borough. A high volume of vehicular traffic and the associated congestion on the A355 corridor, can hinder access to the Slough Trading Estate and Town Centre. The congestion subsequently acts to consign pedestrians and cyclists to the remaining limited and poor-quality road space, creating real and perceived barriers to active travel.

The corridor plays an important economic and transport function for the Britwell and Northborough and Farnham wards, which experience unacceptable levels of deprivation and are disconnected from Slough's buoyant £8 billion economy.

Improving the balance between pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles will enable residents to make more sustainable and affordable travel choices and create a distinct welcoming place for all. The Farnham Road is a vital shopping area that serves the Britwell and Northborough and Farnham ward residents and employees of the Slough Trading Estate and since the decline of Slough High Street has seen more residents visiting this location. However, high crime rates and poor public realm have limited the Centre's potential for economic growth and social function. Moreover, despite Slough's historically strong economic performance, Centre for Cities (2021) research more recently categorised the Borough in the 'top-10 places hardest hit economically by COVID-19'.

The Farnham Road proposals will now include the following:

- Upgrading and revising the phasing of traffic signals (including consolidating the number of traffic signals along the corridor);
- Pedestrian push button on all main junctions and Countdown facilities near the shops to help with safety;
- New zebra crossings at Northborough Road/Cumberland Avenue;
- New public realm materials from Gloucester Avenue to Hampshire Avenue;
- Wider footways for Cafés and other food outlets to facilitate outside eating;
- The introduction of new parking enforcement/restrictions;
- Bus stops and bus shelters to improve the customer experience (bus stop improvements include the removal of street clutter to aid people (especially wheelchair users) to board and alight buses more easily);
- A 20mph zone between Sheffield Road and Essex Avenue;
- New electric vehicle charging points, and new cycle parking, in the main shopping area between Essex Avenue and Sheffield Road;
- Planting/Landscaping with sponsorship opportunities;
- Upgrade of the "Rest Garden" at the junction of Sheffield Road;
- Widened advisory cycle lanes, and further road improvements, along most of Sheffield Road;
- An off-road segregated cycleway;
- Echelon parking bays to maximise the number of parking spaces;
- Sustainable drainage;
- Furnival Avenue Cycle Street;
- Street lighting upgrades.

These measures aim to improve the amenity, encourage those who work and live in the area to take pride in their community space and support the vitality of the shopping area through sustainable travel options.

It is anticipated that the completed scheme will realise the following positive outcomes:

- *Make cycling all inclusive*, providing infrastructure that allows a broader range of people to feel confident cycling on the borough's roads.
- *Improve the health of residents* through an increase of journeys made by active travel modes.
- *Improve air quality along the route*, as more people choose to cycle and walk and car use is reduced.
- *Contribute to a reduction in CO2 emissions* with alternate journeys to car use being made by sustainable modes.
- *Enhance the public realm and journey experience* for pedestrians as well as cyclists, through the introduction of better facilities such as safer crossing points and parking areas along Farnham Road.
- *Improvements to the bus infrastructure will increase bus patronage.*
- *Improve parking facilities along Farnham Road and reduce inconsiderate parking.*
- *Help Farnham Road reach its productivity potential.*

Commissioner Review

The commissioners are content with the recommendations in this report.

2. Report

Introductory paragraph

- 2.1.1. In June 2022 officers submitted a bid to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities for the Destination Farnham Road project and in February 2023 Slough was awarded £9,292,149.00 through the Levelling Up Fund Round 2 (LUF2). The project is to implement strategic transport infrastructure works to support the development of high-quality places that will enhance the local economy.
- 2.1.2. The primary objective of the Levelling Up 2 Fund is to foster a sense of community, local pride, and belonging by empowering local leaders and communities, improving public services, and increasing productivity in areas that are lagging behind.
- 2.2. The completed scheme will contribute to the realisation of the following strategic local and national objectives:

Local Policies:

- **The Corporate Improvement and Recovery Plan. Corporate Plan 2023-27 (A fresh start)**
 - i. *A borough for children and young people to thrive*; by providing a scheme that supports alternative modes of transport that will increase outdoor activity areas and reduce the negative impacts of transport in the borough.
 - ii. *A town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives*; by introducing schemes that reduce the reliance on cars, planning for sustainable travel and improving air quality thereby encouraging more people to walk and cycle.

iii. *A cleaner, healthier and more prosperous Slough;*

- *by seeking grant funding that help progress schemes that benefit the community and help the local economy and;*
- *providing enhancement works that help deliver safer crossing facilities and safer passage to places of work, shopping areas, school, home, worship and entertainment.*

- **Slough's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)**

The LCWIP activities will support our local strategic objectives by evaluating our existing infrastructure and providing designs and maintenance guidelines for cycling and walking infrastructure. When built, these will contribute to the physical and mental wellbeing, socially, safety and security for Slough residents and visitors and enhance the quality of life for its residents through improvements to accessibility and walkability.

- **The Carbon Strategy**

The council has committed to challenging targets, with a net zero carbon target by 2040 for the borough, and a stretch target of 2030 for SBC's operations. Increased public transport provision will make a significant contribution to reducing carbon emissions through encouraging a shift away from private car use and reduce congestion benefits.

- **The Low Emission Strategy**

Active travel and improved Public Transport will have an important part to play in improving air quality along Farnham Road. Improved cycling facilities and enhanced modal interchanges will contribute significantly to low emissions along Farnham Road and improved multi modal connectivity.

- **The Local Transport Plan 3**

This is the over-arching plan for the provision of transport services and infrastructure at local level, across the borough. The current version (LTP3) is currently under review.

- **The Strategic Transport Infrastructure Plan (STIP)**

Car journeys should be replaced by realistic and achievable alternatives. Prioritising public transport will enable negotiations with bus operators. With greater patronage, realised through improved efficiencies, opportunities exist to make public transport use increasingly attractive. i.e. Cost and time savings for residents.

- **Bus Services Improvement Plan (BSIP) and Enhanced Partnership (EP)**

BSIP and EP are both essential processes required in the national bus strategy – Bus Back Better to set out priorities relating to bus priority, fares and ticketing. Slough Borough Council wishes to make it easier for people to travel by bus to get people out of their cars and to provide an alternative for those without access to a car. Bus improvement measures such as better access to bus stops improved bus shelters and reliable timetables encourage people to switch to buses.

National Policies

- **DfT's Gear Change A Bold Vision for cycling and walking** that presents four themes to encourage cycling. These themes include Better Streets for cycling and pedestrians, cycling at the heart of decision making, empowering and encouraging Local Authorities and Enabling people to cycle and protecting them when they do.

The strategy set an objective to double cycling rates and to increase the number of children aged 5 to 10 that usually walk to school from 49% to 55% by 2025.

- **Cycle Infrastructure Guide LTN 1/20** mainly focuses on cycle infrastructure design but briefly provides recommendations for the Planning and Designing for Commercial Cycling.
- **The Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy 2017** outlines the government's ambition to make cycling and walking a natural choice for shorter journeys or as part of longer journeys by 2040. The strategy firstly sets out the Government's objectives, secondly sets out the financial resources available for walking and cycling and lastly describes the specific actions planned to support delivery of the ambition and objectives.

Options considered: -

Option 1: Do nothing

- 2.3. The Do-Nothing option would result in the council not being able to introduce highway and public realm improvements along Farnham Road and hence also not deliver the objectives of the Corporate Plan. The council has received the partial funding and would be required to return the grant funding to the Department for Transport. **This option is not recommended.**

Option 2: Introduce the Public Realm section only.

- 2.4. The exclusion of the cycle lane from the scheme will lead to the Council delivering a project that does not improve access to Farnham Road and beyond via sustainable transportation modes. This deviation from the original plan will fail to meet the objectives outlined in the Destination Farnham Road Levelling Up bid. Consequently, the project sponsor would then seek to reduce or remove funding, as the scheme would not meet the Department for Transport's (DfT) criteria. Moreover, this could diminish the prospects of securing grant funding for similar schemes in the future. **This option is not recommended.**

Option 3: Introduce the public realm scheme and the segregated cycle lane together with supporting infrastructure.

- 2.5. The Destination Farnham Road will introduce a public realm scheme together with junction improvements, upgraded traffic signals, better parking facilities and an LTN1/20 compliant cycle scheme. Delivery of this option satisfies the scheme sponsors, the Department for Transport and Active Travel England by introducing local infrastructure that will have a visible impact on people and their communities. By tackling current challenges, leveraging advantages, and bringing about transformative changes to the transport infrastructure along Farnham Road, the project will not only have a visible impact on people and communities but also contribute to economic recovery. **This is the recommended option.**

2.6. Public consultation

2.6.1. Destination Farnham Road Themes

2.6.2. The consultation was promoted via press releases, social media portals, notification emails to statutory consultees, drop in events and distribution of paper copies of the consultation document.

Invitations to the drop-in sessions were included in the consultation document and the timings extended to allow residents and businesses to attend. Officers did a further catch up on the day of the first drop-in session to notify businesses about responding to the consultation. The drop in events were advertised in the local newspapers and social media platforms.

Leaflets with information about the scheme and questions were sent to residents and businesses that are directly affected by the scheme.

Over the consultation period, three drop-in events were held on 23rd January 2024 from 2-7pm, 25th January 2024 from 10am-4pm and 1st February 2024 from 3-7pm. Face-to-face consultation was an important element, offering the opportunity for the consultees to review plans, speak with council officers and pick up paper copies of the consultation documents and surveys.

The response from the various stakeholders including residents was 481 responses, which has not been seen before for a transport/highway project. This high number means that a good size of the community in this area have provided feedback and this has enabled officers to make more informed decisions on the scheme.

The consultation responses have been categorised into themes below and cover most of the common points raised. More detailed responses are contained in Appendix 1. There will be responses that are not covered in the information below and this is down to the volume of responses that have been received. These responses have been considered and in some cases the scheme amended, however it is not possible to include all the detail in the context of this report. Appendix 1A and B for consultation responses

Themes

Road Safety

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| Consultation feedback |
| Remove 20mph zone as it will slow traffic/ increase congestion |
| Echelon Bays not safe |
| No central reserve and absence of guard rail |
| Visibility issues near junctions |
| Paths separated in a way/Too many cyclists/Wider cycle lanes |
| Speed camera outside the church before VW Garage |
| High volume and high speeds |
| Remove the central reservation and look to make more space for cars and remove the bus lanes |
| No thought for motorcyclists or disabled electric scooters |

From the points raised above the design team have amended the scheme as follows:

- i. **20mph has not been amended/removed** – this is critical as part of improving safety on the Farnham Road and ensuring that the Levelling Up criteria is met. Between Sheffield Road and Northborough roundabout there have been in excess

of 30 collisions in the last 5 years which have included pedestrians (some of which are children). The Farnham Road is also managed by speed cameras due to the number of serious injuries so reducing the speed is key to supporting the community. Congestion from slower speeds is a common misconception and actually is the opposite with slower speeds resulting in a more consistent flow traffic this aids the reduction of congestion.

- ii. **Pedestrian facility at Sheffield Road junction** – This junction is currently only for traffic though many pedestrians use it. The junction design will now incorporate a pedestrian stage with push buttons. All other junctions will have push buttons added.
- iii. **Inclusion of a Countdown facility near Montrose Avenue** – Due to the proximity of the shops and the residential areas there is a high number of pedestrians crossing at this location. It is proposed that countdown facilities are implemented here to help pedestrians.
- iv. **Wider buffer strip adjacent to the echelon bays** – Motorists have responded that they are concerned about the potential when reversing, that other cars may “shunt” them. To reduce this possibility, the scheme has been amended to include approximately 1.5-2m “buffer” strip where vehicles can stop to then reverse and hence avoid being in the main “live” traffic lane. As the speed limit is proposed to be reduced in this area, this will help mitigate against collisions. The central reserve/separation has been removed as well to accommodate the buffer strip and provide a better public realm area.
- v. **Improved visibility at Sheffield Rd junction** – Motorist have responded stating that there are trees/vegetation that block the sight lines for drivers and hence causes a blind spot at this junction – The Levelling Up bid included proposed improvements for the small park so the design is now amending the park to help reduce this problem but also help reduce Anti-Social Behaviour during the day with groups congregating.
- vi. **Cycleways** – cycleways have been designed to the current LTN 1/20 standards to encourage safer routes. Responses suggest that there are too many cyclists however, the data does not support this and hence the infrastructure needed to help encourage more cycling is needed.
- vii. **Motorcyclist/Mobility scooters** – Provision has been made for extra car park spaces including disabled bays, which will accommodate scooters and motorcycles.

Public Transport

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| Consultation feedback |
| Cyclist conflict with bus users on new cycle track |
| A need for bus lanes to support more bus services |
| Bus layby causing access/egress problems near the Tuns Junction/ Bus layby must stay- Concerned at loss of bus bays plus central reservation |
| More buses and better-connected bus service |
| Consider relocating the bus route that currently uses Essex Avenue |

The bus operators sent a combined response with a separate response from Heathrow Airport public transport team. These focused on the following points:

- i. **A need to upgrade bus shelters to improve customer experience** – Along the route and subject to funding and availability bus shelters will be upgraded to improve the customer experience and encourage bus use
 - ii. **Removing bus layby near Tuns junction/Retain bus laybys** – The layby near the Tuns junction will be filled in to prevent the on-going access/egress problems for the residents which has been raised over the past few years and also assist the bus operators with journey times. Other laybys are also being proposed along this section to help increase the width of the footway, helping then to provide bus shelters but also improve bus journeys.
 - iii. **Add a further traffic lane with a view to converting this to a bus lane subject to capacity/demand** – This has been included to help the flow of traffic and also to future proof the area for a possible bus lane subject to passenger demand.
 - iv. **Amend the cycleway and bus stops to reduce conflicts** – the design has been amended to incorporate the concerns raised by the bus operators specifically with regard to passengers boarding and alighting where the cycleway comes close to bus stops. The changes made now satisfy and de-risk conflicts with vulnerable users.
 - v. **Relocate bus service on Essex Ave** – This is not possible as bus services are commercially provided and though the council can help influence bus routes/services, a change to this service would be detrimental to the continuation of the service and lead to local residents being isolated.
- **Public Realm (include street cleaning/rubbish)**

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| Consultation feedback |
| Don't reduce parking for wider footways |
| Bin Storage causing ASB and Vermin problems |
| Planters are creating a place for groups to congregate, causing a perception of safety and crime |
| Plant more trees |

- i. **Widened footways but not at the cost of parking** – There were a few responses on narrow footways and a plea not to reduce parking in order to provide wider footways – The design has taken this point and widened the path where there is a need but has maintained the same number of parking bays.
- ii. **Commercial/Residential waste bins** - Working with waste team, the design team are seeking to improve facilities in some locations to help residents above shops to have segregated bin storage and for commercial trade waste to be kept in a separate location.

- iii. **Planting/Landscaping** – these areas were raised by some businesses and one or two responses from residents – The removal of the existing planters will be incorporated into the scheme and replaced with either decorative bollards or surface level planters that contribute to reducing flooding. Specific locations where planters are being provided will be offered as sponsorship opportunities.
- iv. **Quality but sustainable materials** – a few comments relate to using sustainable products but also providing a good quality scheme that raises the area – The design will include where needed quality materials mixed with conventional material to enhance the wider area including where seating and Cafés are.

Traffic

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| Consultation feedback |
| There is already traffic congestion so no need for a 20mph zone |
| Reduce the number of traffic lights |
| Extra lane towards Slough |
| No data available for cyclists |
| Allowing right hand turning movements into Essex Avenue for all road users |
| Remove some traffic lights, so you aren't stopping every 10metres |
| Impact of traffic when the project commences |
| Introduce one way |

- i. **Traffic congestion** - General comments have been submitted on traffic congestion and the number of pedestrian crossings – The design team have taken into account the number of traffic signals and pedestrian crossings and have removed the crossing point located between Gloucester Ave and Sheffield Road. The design has also incorporated pedestrian stages in all existing junctions to support those visiting the shops.
- ii. **Traffic lights/Essex Ave right turn** - A review of all junctions being upgraded along the scheme will be undertaken including the staging/phase for each road to deliver the optimum flow. The right turn is being included within the review with an intention to include all traffic. A pedestrian crossing is being removed south of Gloucester Ave but all other junctions require traffic signals.
- iii. **Additional Lanes** - A further traffic lane between Gloucester Ave and Sheffield Road has been included and this will support capacity/journey time but also support a future Bus Lane subject to demand increasing.
- iv. **Cycling Data** - Cycling data has been included in the **Appendix 3** for information
- v. **Delays as part of the works** – There will be traffic delays as part of the works however, this will be managed by the contractor and engineers to minimise the impact by working on smaller sections. This will mean the scheme takes longer to deliver but will ensure that businesses are not adversely affected.
- vi. **One Way** – This was considered for some locations such as Montrose Ave exiting on to the Farnham Road but this would mean additional movements for cars and lead to more congestion at other junctions.

Public Protection (Anti Social Behaviour (“ASB”), Crime, Licensing)

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| Consultation feedback |
| ASB issues around planters |
| ASB issues in the small park near Sheffield Rd |
| Night-time problems with parking outside takeaways |
| Install CCTV to improve safety |
| Sitting areas will attract drunks |

- i. **Planters** - The design team have identified planters where ASB issues have been occurring and are proposing to replace some with surface level planting which will reduce the problem. In addition some businesses have suggested they would be happy to maintain and/or sponsor planting so this will be further developed as the scheme proceeds.
- ii. **ASB problems at the small park (Rest Garden) near Sheffield Road** – this has on-going ASB issues with drinking and drugs; it is proposed to open the garden up so that residents can claim the area back as a “Rest” area and also help to reduce crime. The garden will have some landscaping to improve the amenity. Any seating that will be installed will consider the impacts of preventing rough sleepers and groups congregating.
- iii. **Alleged ASB** - Issues near takeaway shops is an on-going problem however, the proposal seeks to design some of the problems out by controlling where cars can be parked resulting in cars being parked further away from the residential properties.
- iv. **Install CCTV** – This is no longer a service that the council provides and following responses from Thames valley Police there has been no request to include further camera along the scheme.

Parking

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| Consultation feedback |
| Lack of parking |
| No parking enforcement/ placing more cameras to pick up people parking illegally |
| Motorists will double park where the new bays are? |
| Keep the service road near Sheffield Road/Farnham Road |
| Request for limited waiting parking (one to two hours) |
| Introduce 45-degree parking by Exotic |

Parking issues were raised frequently throughout the consultation both in written and verbal responses.

- i. **Lack of parking for shoppers/staff** - The current layout indicates that there are approximately 73 spaces near the shops between the Northborough roundabout and Sheffield Road, the consultation design reduced the parking to approximately 65 however following the feedback and a review of the design the number of spaces has increased to 79, this includes 6 disabled spaces.

- ii. **Lack of parking enforcement** – this will be addressed as part of the final scheme with new traffic regulation orders being processed to help maintain passing trade. The current restrictions are difficult to enforce with “one hour free”, this will change to a pay by phone system which can be enforced. This will ensure that business users or shoppers do not park all day in these locations and in addition it expected with longer enforcement hours that some of the ASB problems around takeaways will be reduced.
- iii. **Double parking where the new parking bays are located** – To ensure that there is compliance there will be additional restrictions on the main road in the form of “Red-routes” this will be enforced through camera enforcement to ensure compliance and free flowing traffic.
- iv. **Keep the service road near Sheffield Road/Farnham Road** – The service road near the post office and shops has now been reinstated into the scheme providing extra car parking spaces.
- v. **Limited waiting parking** – Parking restrictions will be considered as part of a separate consultation exercise and will need to be balanced with how enforcement is then managed. It is proposed that Pay by phone options will need to be implemented to ensure that cars do not park all day.
- vi. **Introduce 45 degree parking by Exotic** – Echelon parking has been implemented where there is sufficient room, at this location there would be issues with visibility and this would only marginally increase the number of spaces.

Maintenance and Street lighting

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| Consultation feedback |
| Street lighting is not good so any lighting will be welcome? |
| Behind the shops the service road is in poor shape |
| Use the money to resurface roads and fix pot holes instead/use the money for realistic things like road improvement with pot holes etc |
| Tacky street furniture outside Tuns Pub |

- i. **Streetlighting improvements** – The design has not specified the type of lighting that will be implemented but it is expected that lighting will increase to improve safety for both road users as well reduce crime. The lighting columns will also take into account opportunities for banners and Christmas lights to support the community.
- ii. **Rear Service Road** - The design team are reviewing the rear of the shops to better facilitate parking, bin storage as well as the maintenance of the service road. The road is currently private so there are limitations on what can be achieved, but it is expected that some improvements will be made here.
- iii. **Pot holes/Poor road condition** -There will be some resurfacing as well a new upgrades footways. Where identified pot-holes and defective surfacing will be replaced.

- iv. **Tacky street furniture** – The scheme design where possible will be seeking to remove old street furniture and provide good but affordable quality replacements. This furniture will help lift the area but also be easy to replace/maintain.

2.6.3 The results from the consultation shows that there has been good engagement and a range of views due to the nature of the shops and residential areas. Though there has not been overwhelming support for the scheme in terms of justification for spending these funds, it is clear based on some of the design options that residents and businesses are supportive. The design team have worked hard to include where practical adjustments to the scheme to meet the requests include improving the look of the area, street lighting, reducing traffic lights, increasing parking etc.

2.6.4 Further engagement with ward councillors has been undertaken to gather comments and concerns. These have been also reflected in the amended design.

2.6.5 **Statutory Consultees**

2.6.6 Thames Valley Police (TVP)

There were no objections received from TVP but there were concerns relating to the 20mph zone and around how the cycle infrastructure will work function around traffic. The supporting data will be shared with TVP. See Appendix 4

2.6.7 Bus Operators

A jointly signed letter from First Bus, Thames Valley Buses and Carousel was submitted identifying a number of concerns relating to design standards and potential conflicts. These points covered in Appendix 4 were addressed in a meeting with the relevant parties and Heathrow's public transport officer.

The additional concern is that though the amended design accommodates now a minor widening it does not incorporate further bus lanes which the bus stakeholders feel this is a missed opportunity. In response the additional lane now included facilitates a discussion for later alterations subject to the bus services and passenger growth increasing.

2.6.8 Heathrow Airport Ltd (HAL)

HAL provided similar general comments however, a further plan to increase bus lane infrastructure was sent. This plan can be seen in Appendix 2 and though it provides an alternative option for public transport it will not address the key bid requirements as part of the levelling up bid. It is proposed that these plans are retained for future consideration.

2.6.9 Local Neighbouring Authorities (RBWM and Bucks Council)

No objections were received from the two neighbouring councils however, observations and concerns were raised covering cycling, walking, public transport and traffic. These comments are covered in Appendix 4.

2.6.10 RNIB and Guide Dogs

No objections were received from the RNIB and Guide Dogs. However, the two statutory consultees raised similar points regarding the proposed shared surfaces,

shared footway/cycleway, and street furniture. These points were carefully considered, and the designs were adjusted accordingly to address these concerns.. A full response can be seen in Appendix 4 furthermore a full Equality Impact Assessment is in Appendix 6.

2.6.11 Businesses

A number of businesses responded to the consultation. The comments and concerns have been incorporated into the wider responses from the public as many related to the same points such as parking, ASB, 20mph zone etc. There were comments specifically from long standing businesses whose views were that the scheme would not achieve anything. These comments were directed at the number of takeaway shops and how this has altered the opportunities for a vibrant shopping area. The views were that the Council/Planning service have permitted/approved these applications.

Having liaised with the planning service officers can report that due to a change in the law over the types of unit on the Farnham Road means that planning is not required as there is “no change of use”. This needs to be articulated to the businesses as it is felt that the council are creating this problem.

2.6.12 Active Travel England (ATE)

Comments on the design of the cycling infrastructure has been provided by ATE. These comments are included in Appendix 4 and cover issues such as connecting existing cycle ways to the new proposed scheme, signal stage timings for pedestrians and cyclists, minimising shared-use paths etc. These have been incorporated into the current design to satisfy this government team within the DfT.

Background

- 2.7. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities took steps to tackle regional disparities and foster growth and prosperity in historically disadvantaged or economically challenged areas. As part of this initiative, local authorities were invited to submit proposals for capital grant funding under the Levelling Up theme. Slough, in response, presented a proposal focused on implementing a strategic transport infrastructure project. This project aims to enhance access, quality of spaces and road safety along Farnham Road, ultimately boosting the local economy.
- 2.8. The scheme will support the governments Levelling Up 2 agenda in particular; Transport investments including public transport, active travel, road improvements, aiming to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality.
- 2.9. The scheme proposal seek to deliver the following:
 - Creating a higher quality public realm for residents, businesses and visitors by; introducing better footways with distinctive paving material, street furniture, and cycling facilities that will create a functional urban environment that emphasises pedestrian public space across road junctions and connecting the north and south areas of Farnham Road.
 - Introduce wayfinding totems that will improve journey quality and help assist visitors to easily locate shopping facilities, dining options, and the overall local environment.

- Improved lighting along the route and at the back of the shops
- Upgrades to access points for bus shelters.
- Improved landscaping and access to open spaces along Farnham Road that will also enhance the quality and accessibility of Salt Hill Park and surrounding neighbourhoods via the National Cycle Network (NCN) route.
- Introduction of journey time monitoring, traffic volume and cycle monitoring devices.
- Improvements to signalised and unsignalised junctions to provide for safer crossing facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and vulnerable road users accessing the shopping parade between Sheffield Road and Essex Avenue.
- Review of existing parking restrictions to provide improved parking facilities and waiting restrictions to enhance parking management and road safety in the area.
- Introducing a segregated cycle lane along Farnham Road.

Location

- 2.10. The proposed Destination Farnham Road scheme is located on the northern side of the A4 Bath Road and covers the stretch of A355 Farnham Road from its junction with Cumberland Avenue to its junction with the A4 Bath Road, though most of the works are centred around the shops between Cumberland Avenue and Sheffield Road.
- 2.11. The Farnham Road plays a crucial role in providing access to various destinations, including the M4 junction 6 to the south and the M40 junction 2 to the north. It serves not only the residents and local SME businesses but also the neighbouring light industrial estate (Segro). The area along Farnham Road is a mix of residential properties, commercial establishments, schools, community facilities, and open spaces that attracts traffic. The central location and high traffic volume along Farnham Road has led to persistent problems such as traffic congestion, increased parking demand, and road safety concerns along the route.
- 2.12. The proposed Destination Farnham Road scheme will produce a coherent design that sets out to address the traffic congestion, parking demand, safety issues, air quality and to provide a public realm scheme to support the busy and active space that residents and businesses use daily.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1. Financial implications

- 3.1.1. The Council has been awarded £9,292,149.00 Capital Grant through the Levelling Up Fund Round 2 (LUF2) funding by Active Travel England - Department for Transport to introduce works. Additional match funding from grant for £1,003,412.00 has been committed by the Council. The total scheme budget is £10,295,561.00.
- 3.1.2. The current approved capital programme, as agreed by Council on the 7th March 2024 included a budget of £2.768m for 2023/24 and £7.482m for 2024/25. Actual expenditure to the end March 2024 is some £170k. This is a ring-fenced grant and can only be utilised for the purpose set out in the

Memorandum of Understanding agreed between DFT and Slough BC in 2023. It is therefore necessary to approve slippage of £2.6m from 2023/24 to 2024/25 to avoid potential clawback of those funds not yet utilised, and progress the scheme as intended. Furthermore, it is necessary to reprofile the scheme to reflect the timing change since approval of the 2024/25 to 2027/28 capital programme which now assumes £7.5m will be incurred during 2025/26, not 2024/25.

- 3.1.3. The grant funding will fund costs associated with the design and the construction works of the cycle scheme.
- 3.1.4. Officers working on the project will be able to undertake full cost recovery for their time with the additional engineer, site supervisor and quantity surveyor costs also included for the on-site works. Engineers have provided options for designs to make sure that we have certainty on the budget and deliverability of the project.
- 3.1.5. With all construction on the highway, there are risks associated with utility apparatus under the road surface. Officers have undertaken assessments to determine the scale of risk and have also provided approximately 20% contingency of the construction works (£7,100,386.98) equating to around £1,420,077.40. Furthermore, through a project board early risks will be mitigated through a value engineering process to ensure that there is no budget overspend. As risks are mitigated the contingency will be released to allow for provisional work to be undertaken.
- 3.1.6. Failure to implement the scheme will result in grant funds of £9,292,149.00 being repaid to the project sponsor, Department for Transport/ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. To date approximately £175k has been spent on designs, surveys and utility work to deliver the final design.

3.2. Legal implications

- 3.2.1. The Traffic Management Act 2004 (Section 16(1)) imposes a Network Management Duty to ensure that Slough Borough Council secures the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network and facilitates the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority.
- 3.2.2. The Council as a Local Transport Authority (LTA) has statutory functions under the Local Transport Act 2008 and has statutory duty to comply with the Transport Act 2000, as amended by the Bus Services Act 2017. The Council is also under a statutory duty to comply with the National Bus Strategy.
- 3.2.3. The guidance emphasises that the Public Sector Equality Duty still applies and in making any changes to their road networks, Councils must ensure that elements of a scheme do not discriminate, directly or indirectly and must consider their duty to make reasonable adjustments anticipating the needs of those with protected characteristics, for example, by carrying out equality impact assessments on proposed schemes. Engagement with groups representing disabled people and others with protected characteristics should be carried out at an early stage of scheme development. Visually impaired people, particularly, may find navigating through changed layouts difficult if they are not thought through at the design and consultation stage.

- 3.2.4. All proposals that require permanent and temporary traffic orders will be subject to procedures under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (RTRA 1984) and the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. It should be noted that under the RTRA 1984 s.122 the Council has the duty to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic (including pedestrians) and involves a balancing exercise in accordance with that Act.
- 3.2.5. Part 3.6 of the Constitution sets out the Scheme of Delegation to Officers and under Section 2 -Executive Directors' general delegated powers include: taking and implementing any decision required for operational effectiveness, taking any action necessary to ensure the effective development and implementation of the Council's key strategies and services relating to directorates and attending and representing the Council on partnership boards. Under section 4, specific delegation is given to the Executive Director – Place for the function relating to Transport planning.
- 3.2.6. The introduction of signage and road markings will be undertaken using the Councils statutory powers as the Highway Authority and The Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016.

3.3. Risk management implications

| <i>Description of risk</i> | <i>Risk/Threats/Opportunities</i> | <i>Current Controls</i> | <i>Proposed future controls</i> |
|--|--|---|--|
| Objections to the proposed scheme and changes to the design due to unfavourable response from the wider public consultation. | Revision of the scheme to accommodate residences feedback. | Early engagement with affected residents and businesses about the proposed scheme | Consultation process has followed through the statutory process and early consultation with key stakeholders will be undertaken. Residents are aware of the scheme due to prior engagement activity and press release around bid award. Provide clear and transparent communication regarding the benefits of the scheme and addressing misconceptions and emphasising positive outcomes. |
| Objection to proposed Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) Objection to the temporary and permanent traffic orders by residents. | Likely to cause delay to the scheme delay and significant changes to the scheme if the objection is not set aside. | Undertake the TRO process as part of the Consultation process for residents to understand the scheme proposals and benefits of the TRO's. | The TRO process has followed the statutory process and is advertised as per requirements of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 – Section 9 and the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996- Regulation 22. |

| <i>Description of risk</i> | <i>Risk/Threats/Opportunities</i> | <i>Current Controls</i> | <i>Proposed future controls</i> |
|---|---|---|---|
| Impact of inflation on the scheme Project costs increase due to continued unforeseen circumstances such as increased supply chain costs, exchange rate fluctuation or specification changes. | Financial implications to the Council and the project deliverables | Value Engineering will also be undertaken for the proposed scheme. | Due to the continuous rise in construction costs, a contingency of 20% has been applied for the construction works. Value Engineering will also be undertaken for the proposed scheme. |
| Congestion on the network. Disruption to traffic and accessibility during construction phases | Journey time delays due to construction works of the scheme | Agree Traffic Management Plans with the Contractor. Work closely with Highways to ensure a coordinated and well communicated approach is undertaken | Advance warning of the scheme works and continuous monitoring of traffic to check if any changes are required. Ensure a clear communications strategy to inform residents, businesses, and stakeholders of works |
| Funding Constraints | Unforeseen issues such as utility diversion and general delays may impact scheme costs and lead to an overspend | Use of existing network to reduce costs | There is a 20% contingency to manage impacts to the budget but further value engineering processes will be undertaken during weekly/fortnightly meetings with the contractor and client team. De-scoping of the scheme may also be needed to ensure costs remain in budget envelop. |

3.4. *Environmental implications*

- 3.4.1. In its recently published strategies, the government set out its vision for a Net Zero Transport system which will benefit all. Public transport and active travel will be the natural first choice for daily activities; cars used less and residents able to rely on a convenient, cost-effective and coherent public transport network.
- 3.4.2. The Council's ambitions are described in key corporate strategies including the 2040 Vision and Climate Change Strategies with their key principles upheld through delivery of measures such improved cycling and walking transport links and improved public real.
- 3.4.3. The scheme will help create attractive, accessible and liveable places that contribute to better healthy, wellbeing and where everyone has the same access to opportunity and provide the conditions for sustainable, inclusive and resilient economic growth, including enabling regeneration and redevelopment.
- 3.4.4. The promotion of cycling as an alternate mode of transport can lead to a reduction in carbon emissions. By encouraging more people to cycle instead of using private

vehicles, the scheme can contribute to lowering emissions and mitigating the impacts of climate change. Similarly, reduced reliance on vehicles can result in improved air quality. With fewer vehicles on the road, there will be a decrease in pollutants such as particulate matter and nitrogen oxides, leading to cleaner and healthier air for residents. Promoting active lifestyles can lead to improved public health outcomes by encouraging physical activity. Increased cycling will reduce rates of sedentary behaviour and associated health issues fostering a healthier and more active local population.

3.5. *Equality implications*

3.5.1. An EIA has been completed for the consultation. See Appendix 5. Another EIA will be completed as part of the consultation exercise for the preliminary designs. The design and construction will be undertaken using the Inclusive Mobility – A Guide to Best Practise on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure 2021 and various DfT Toolkits to ensure compliance. In particular:

- The scheme will provide well-lit public realm, improved access to the bus stops and safer cycle routes promotes a cycling environment that is appealing to both genders and a wide age range.
- A consultation and engagement activities were undertaken with diverse stakeholder groups targeted to ensure the scheme meets the needs of different groups.
- Regular monitoring and evaluation will help identify any inequalities that have not been captured in the EIA.

3.6. *Procurement implications*

3.6.1. A procurement exercise will be undertaken for the design of the traffic signals. The construction works will be undertaken via existing framework agreements or use of the new Minor and major works contractor.

3.6.2. The Council has already approved the ITS framework for the purchase and maintenance of traffic signal equipment, which was tendered as part of a wider Berkshire contract. This contract will be utilised for procuring new equipment.

3.6.3. The major construction works are proposed to be implemented through the Highway Maintenance and Minor Works contract which is due to be tendered in Spring. Subject to timescales it is also possible subject to procurement approval that a framework contract may be utilised.

3.6.4. A procurement business case for works will be developed which will consider the most appropriate procurement route according to the Council's contract procedure rules, UK Procurement regulations and will need to follow public procurement principles of value for money, equality of treatment, transparency and proportionality.

3.7. *Workforce implications*

3.7.1. None

3.8. *Property implications*

3.8.1. Officers have designed options that are likely to be adjacent to assets that the council is disposing of as part of its Asset Disposal Strategy, but it is not anticipated that the scheme will impact the value of these sales.

4. Background Papers

None