

**FARNHAM WITH STRATFORD ST ANDREW
DELIVERY GROUP FOR THE TWO VILLAGES BY-PASS**

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 10 August 2024 at the Riverside Centre

Councillors present: Ian Norman (Chair), Richard Ayres, Rosemary Conibeer, Jill Pass, Tim Plant and Jeremy Williams.

In attendance: Katherine Abbott (Parish Clerk), John Craddock (SZC: Senior Project Manager Offsite Infrastructure), Richard Knights (SZC: Senior Community Relations Manager), Jez Porter (SZC: Senior Project Manager, Highways), Nick Newton (ESC: Arboriculture and Landscape Manager) and Ikechukwu Uchehara (SCC: Principal Engineer).

There were approximately 35 members of the public present for the meeting.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Steve Merry (SCC: Transport Policy and Development Manager), Councillor Sally Noble (ESC), Councillor Andrew Reid (SCC), Councillor Richard Sayer (PC) and Councillor Annabel Warne (PC).

2 Introductions

The Chairman invited those participating in the meeting to introduce themselves.

Before turning to the published agenda, the Chairman referred to rumours and comments it had become aware of to the effect that the by-pass was now to be a relief road and asked SZC to comment on this. Mr Richard Knight stated that SZC always referred to the delivery of a by-pass and confirmed that there was no intention to build a relief road. The Chairman thanked SZC for this welcome clarity.

Mr John Craddock then provided a short presentation which showed an overview of the SZC site. Key points from the presentation were:

- Currently the design majority was 75% with 100% expected very shortly
- A live tender was in place to appoint a contractor to deliver the by-pass
- Images of the proposed three span bridge in the parish were shown. Mr Craddock stated that this would “weather-in” and not be as stark as the artist’s impression
- The roundabout at Friday Street (A12/B1094) would be delivered early
- The finds from the archaeological excavations at Friday Street were now being catalogued
- The main construction works were scheduled for Spring 2025, subject to the successful conclusion of the tender process
- Ecology and site clearance would commence in October 2024 through to March 2025
- Site accesses were being mobilised

The Chairman thanked Mr Craddock for his presentation.

3 Discussion

The Chairman advised the meeting that the Parish Council sought confirmation that certain measures (as detailed on the published agenda) were, or would be, included in the final construction plans for the two villages by-pass as documented and recommended by Ms Ruth Knight of LDA Design at a previous meeting with SZC held on 20 July 2023.

Councillor Richard Ayres summarised the design features and that these had previously been included on plans and drawings indicated as “draft and for discussion”. However, the Parish Council had not seen the final iteration of the plans/ drawings and, as there was an expectation following the July 2023 meeting, that these recommendations would be included, it now sought confirmation of that or clarification if any measures were not included.

Mr Craddock explained that the requirements to be included in the final drawings/plans were being prepared with LDA Design. He said that there were issues to be resolved but it was hoped to factor into the final plans as many of the measures highlighted as possible and feasible.

Councillor Ayres expressed his concerns at the language being used; he stated that SZC had previously made concessions which had been accepted in good faith. He asked for further explanation.

Mr Craddock reiterated that SZC was trying to include the measures but highlighted that some might impact on SCC in terms of future maintenance etc. and so needed careful consideration.

Councillor Ayres said that Ruth Knight, acting as landscaping and noise mitigation designer for SZC, had made the suggestions. The measures had not been requested by the Parish Council. SZC had offered to mitigate noise nuisance and modifications of other elements including, for example, a specific offer of a 3m high bund.

Mr Craddock said the final designs were not yet complete. The final design would be shared with SCC and ESC for technical review, comment and ultimately ‘sign-off’.

Councillor Ayres asked the representatives of SCC and ESC present to clarify their involvement and how the PC might have input or seek consultation on the final drawings/plans. Mr Craddock stated that the ‘sign off’ of the designs was not a consultative process.

Mr Uchehara (SCC) said that SCC had commented on the designs at the 50% complete review and the final detailed designs were awaited. He reiterated Mr Craddock’s remark that, at that stage, SCC would interrogate the designs and provide SZC with its feedback. He undertook to ask Steve Merry to respond to the PC about any opportunities for the PC to contribute via SCC.

ACTION: Ike Uchehara/Steve Merry

Mr Newton also said that ESC would, similarly, be consulted on the final designs. He suggested that SZC provide the PC with a more detailed written update on where the

process was at, the technical reasons why the recommended measures referred to may not be included and to confirm what would be included.

ACTION: SZC to consider this suggestion

Councillor Ayres said that SZC had not provided the parish with confidence that the recommended measures would be included in the final designs for the by-pass and had now made it clear the PC could not participate in the consultation or influence the design.

Mr Porter said SZC was keen to listen and to expedite work to bring benefits to the area. However, SZC was not yet at the point where it could share designs. He added that between now and 7 October 2024, SZC would consider how best to engage with the PC to try and ensure the PC got the result it sought. Mr Porter briefly referred to the measures detailed on the agenda. He stressed that whilst there were no guarantees, SZC would do its best to deliver these and would involve the PC as much as possible. Mr Porter said that there might be engineering constraints on some of the measures, but, if possible, appropriate compromises would be sought to ensure the optimum solutions were identified. Mr Porter said SZC was committed to providing noise attenuating fencing and would look at the expected benefits and how best to achieve these.

ACTION: SZC

With reference to the noise-attenuation measures where footpath routes created gaps, Mr Porter stated that these would overlap to minimise noise nuisance. Mr Porter also referred to the informal access routes and said SZC would look to see if these could go around new infrastructure to maintain access via an alternative route.

ACTION: SZC

With reference to the additional bund around the construction compound, Mr Porter said this would be a solid panelling system for both security and environmental protection reasons. The details of this panelling would be shared with the PC.

ACTION: SZC

With reference to low noise road surfacing, Mr Porter said there were several options available, and referred to the surface used on the B1122 in Yoxford which had reduced vibration and noise. He said that it was important to identify the best material to ensure longevity of the surface. He added that maintenance arrangements in the future with SCC were yet to be resolved. Mr Porter said he would speak with Steve Merry (SCC) and stressed that he was aware of the need to ensure confidence in the community.

ACTION: SZC

Mr Knight suggested that Ruth Knight of LDA Design be asked to come to a future meeting of the PCs Delivery Group to show and explain the final designs. A date for this to be agreed between SZC and the PC.

ACTION: SZC/Parish Clerk

Councillor Jill Pass asked what would happen if the archaeological stage identified a site of historical significance. Mr Porter said that evaluation trenches had already been undertaken with nothing of note being identified; the county archaeological team would record anything found before the construction of the road commenced. SZC would work around any precious historical site, if found.

A member of the public said that it was extremely disappointing that the commencement of the by-pass had been pushed back; she expressed frustration at the delay as road safety

was an issue. Mr Craddock said that everything possible was being done to speed up timescales, including shortened review periods. He fully acknowledged that the by-pass was critical infrastructure.

The Chairman invited members of the public to raise their hands to ask questions.

Q: With reference to the sharp bend in Farnham, traffic leaving Farnham and wishing to turn on to the A12 heading north, find this difficult and at times unsafe due, in part, to the increased traffic and it appears that there is no consideration of this in the current plans?

A: Mr Porter said SZC were looking at additional monitoring of traffic levels and were very conscious of the need to maintain road safety.

Another member of the public also referred to access from properties approximately 2ft from the A12 on a blind bend in Farnham. This was also noted.

Mr Porter asked the public present to comment on the current 40mph speed limit (from 50mph) and the average speed camera. A significant number of the public present at the meeting indicated that they would wish the 40mph speed limit to be continued or extended and its benefits were described. A resident referred to the adverse impact of the 40mph speed limit on access and egress from her property which was also her business. She asked if something could be added to the road layout to create gaps in traffic.

ACTION: SZC/SCC to consider the public's requests

Q: Is the planned start date on the bypass conditional on anything?

A: Mr Craddock stated that the appointment of a contractor and the agreement of the civil framework with SCC were key stages, but these were nearly complete, and he was not aware of anything that would delay their progress.

Q: When will the contractor, currently subject to a live tender process, be appointed?

A: The evaluation and recommendations would be completed by January 2025 and the contractor would be mobilised in March 2025 in readiness.

Q: Will the change of national Government impact on the project?

A: Mr Knight said the project had been included in the Labour Party's manifesto. He believed the funding to continue the project was in place.

Q: Do you have plans for responding to any protests?

A: Mr Knight said SZC had its own security team but would also call on the police if needed.

Q: With reference to the hydrology report for Foxborrow Wood, an ancient woodland, I (a resident) have been assured that the wood will not be drained. ESC, via Nick Newton, had also raised this during the DCO consultation. Can you please re-assure me on this matter?

A: Mr Newton said that the Environment Agency would be monitoring the wood. Mr Porter added that SZC would also monitor via boreholes which would indicate any adverse effects on water levels though these were not anticipated.

The meeting concluded at 8.40pm